

# COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

FALL 1970

---

## Is Muckraking Coming Back?

CAREY McWILLIAMS

---

## Why We Lack a National Press Council

NORMAN E. ISAACS

---

## Salvaging the Presidential Press Conference

JULES WITCOVER

---

'Tripping' on the Drug Scene

MARION K. SANDERS

What Really Happened in Biafra?

KAREN ROTHMYER

... to assess the performance of journalism in all its forms, to call attention to its shortcomings and strengths, and to help define—or redefine—standards of honest, responsible service . . .  
... to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession and to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent.

# COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

Fall, 1970

*Columbia Journalism Review* is published quarterly under auspices of the faculty, alumni, and friends of the Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University.

Dean and editorial chairman: Elie Abel.

Visiting Editor: Alfred Balk.

Contributing Editor: James Boylan.

Art director: Burton Wenk. Circulation manager: Sylvia Orr. Circulation consultant: S. O. Shapiro. Subscription assistant: Liliane Zaretsky. Production assistant: Mary Parsons.

Board of advisory editors: Edward W. Barrett (chairman), Richard T. Baker, W. Phillips Davison, Fred W. Friendly, Norman E. Isaacs, Luther P. Jackson, Penn T. Kimball, John Luter, Melvin Mencher, John M. Patterson, Louis M. Starr, Leonard Wallace Robinson, Frederick T.C. Yu.

Chairman, publishing committee: Louis G. Cowan.

Volume IX, Number 3, Fall, 1970. Published four times a year by Graduate School of Journalism, New York, N. Y. Editorial and business offices: 700 Journalism Building, Columbia University, New York, N. Y. 10027. © 1970 Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University. Printed by Vermont Printing Co., Brattleboro, Vt. 05301.

Subscription rates: \$6.00 a year. Single copy: \$1.75. Add 50c a year for subscriptions going outside the United States and United States possessions.

Second-class postage paid at New York, N. Y., and Brattleboro, Vt.

## Articles

- 8 Is muckraking coming back?  
Carey McWilliams
- 16 Why we lack a national press council  
Norman E. Isaacs
- 27 Salvaging the presidential press conference  
Jules Witcover
- 35 'Tripping' on the drug scene  
Marion K. Sanders
- 43 What really happened in Biafra?  
Karen Rothmyer
- 48 The tribal fixation  
William Artis, Jr.

## Departments

- 2 Passing comment: views of the editors
- 50 Notes on the art:
  - What the 'Times' could learn from London letters pages. Robert Yoakum
  - Covering the White House hunger conference. Lewis W. Wolfson
  - The underground GI press. Murray Polner
  - Bedlam on campus? John Breen
- 58 Books noted
- 59 Unfinished business
- 64 Report on reports
  - the lower case (inside back cover)

## Passing comment

### Something for the press

Judging from its title alone, the Newspaper Preservation Act, which became law on July 28, might be thought to be aimed at saving quaint old editorial offices as museums. There is at least a glimmer of truth in this idea, for the act may salvage some quaint old newspapers by shielding them from the normal functioning of antitrust law. This is the first point to remember about the act: by legalizing "joint operating agreements" it grants a kind of antitrust immunity allowed no other unregulated U.S. industry. It is, as the July 20 *Time* stated, A LICENSE TO FIX PRICES.

The U.S. Supreme Court, in a legal test of such agreements under prior law, last year ruled the agreements illegal in the Tucson *Star/Citizen* case. The right of separately owned papers to trim overhead by sharing mechanical plants and business staffs was not disputed. What was in question was the fixing of advertising rates and pooling of profits without relationship to costs. To advocates of the act, approving this seems an acceptable price for "preserving competitive editorial voices" in a community. To critics such as Paul Conrad, former general counsel of the National Newspaper Association (representing 7,000 small daily and weekly newspapers), it seems both morally repugnant and conducive to precisely the opposite effect.

"A joint operation," says Conrad, "is the most formidable barrier that can be erected to discourage newcomers in the same market, because it effectively brings together the combination of two organizations and divides the market between

them. . . . We don't think the legislation would serve the newspaper industry as a whole. . . . In the present climate, I think it is unfortunate that anyone in our business feels he has to ask Congress for . . . legislation, particularly antitrust action."

Moreover, as Stephen R. Barnett has pointed out in *CJR* ["Newspaper 'Preservation'—or Monopoly?" Winter 1969-70], the act's immediate beneficiaries (certain to be joined by others, who must come hat in hand to the Attorney General for approval) scarcely are uniformly destitute. Indeed, "approximately one-quarter are owned by large chains such as Scripps-Howard, Newhouse, Hearst, Knight, and Cox."

Let there be no mistake: the law was not designed to save a few sturdy independents who happened to run into financial trouble. It will help out urban businesses of considerable size—managements the Blackfoot, Ida., *News* called "barefoot millionaires." Powerful millionaires, it might have added, with enough awesome influence on public careers to assemble heavy majorities in both houses—majorities cutting significantly across party and ideological lines in this, an election year for every U.S. Representative and for one-third of the U.S. Senate.

Is it possible, as the act's advocates contended, that by any logical reasoning its passage was a victory for press freedom? If so, then one can only wonder why there was so little editorial crowing about its passage—especially in cities alleged to be its beneficiaries. In a sampling of twenty out of forty-four "joint operating agreement" newspapers in the week the act passed the Senate, *CJR* found that only thirteen carried stories mentioning the passage, and of these only five listed the twenty-two cities affected. Of these five, only two—the Nashville *Tennessean* and Salt Lake City *Deseret News*—named themselves as specifically benefited by the act. (The Scripps-Howard chain, for one, later did circulate an editorial in which member papers acknowledged, and defended, their beneficiary roles.)

Shortly after the act was signed—again without fanfare—by President Nixon in San Clemente, a suit testing its constitutionality was filed in San Francisco by the Bay Guardian Company, publisher of an independent investigatory newspaper,

---

EDITOR'S NOTE: With this issue James Boylan, founding editor of *CJR* who has been on leave, returns to the staff as Contributing Editor. Alfred Balk will remain as Visiting Editor for this academic year.



and by its editors, Bruce B. and Jean Dibble Bruggmann. The defendants named are the publishers of the two San Francisco daily newspapers and their joint agency, the San Francisco Newspaper Printing Company. Among the principal charges: that the Preservation Act allows the defendants to "monopolize and preempt" San Francisco advertising revenues, thus abridging the "freedom of the press guaranteed to the plaintiff"; that the act "bears no rational relationship to the financial condition" of its beneficiaries now or "for the unlimited future"; and that, to enter into such an agreement henceforth, one must satisfy the "unique requirement" of approval by "a high governmental official"—the Attorney General. In setting up the test, the *Bay Guardian* is performing a saving function that more formidable elements of the newspaper business should be doing for themselves.

## Scramble for TV access

For much of this election year, Congress, the Federal Communications Commission, the networks, and the national party organizations have been embroiled in a noisy dispute over access to television's best hours. The approach of the elections, the institutional jealousy in Congress of the President's prerogatives, the increasing heartburn of Democrats over being out of the White House, and the desire of commercial broadcasters to keep control of what they regard as their own air time have all added to the intensity of the conflict.

At the same time, the country is starting to thresh out issues that deeply affect the long-run nature of American broadcasting. One way of putting the major question is: Will broadcasters remain the primary arbiters of content on television or will they incur—voluntarily or by compulsion—obligations as common carriers for the body politic? Or, as the issue is often put in shorthand terms: Who will have access and how? There is considerable point in the observation by the FCC's pariah member, Nicholas Johnson, that we now

can measure power "in terms of access to the mass media."

The Fairness Doctrine, part of the FCC's regulations providing for balanced presentation of public issues on the air, has been held enforceable by the Supreme Court. But the FCC has applied the doctrine only cautiously to national politics. Now, in the controversy over how to balance President Nixon's frequent commandeering of three-network, prime-time TV, the pressure is on for the FCC to set the limits more exactly.

The FCC has taken small steps: It supported a Democratic bid to make the networks sell them fund-raising time, but said that the networks did not have to give Democrats time to present partisan issues. Then it moved in a slightly different direction and ruled that Presidential speeches on Indochina had created an imbalance that had to be remedied on prime time; meanwhile, it turned down a group of antiwar senators. Then it ordered CBS to give the Republicans free time to respond to the Democratic "Loyal Opposition" series, causing CBS to drop the whole idea after only one broadcast.

Clearly, these tedious steps have left the definition of the Fairness Doctrine only half-written. But they do not inspire confidence that the Commission will arrive in the end at a solution that recognizes TV's dual nature as a news medium and as a public facility. Indeed, Steve Knoll, in *Variety* for Aug. 26, wrote that he saw a pattern of using the Fairness Doctrine to involve the FCC in editorial decisions. For example, the FCC accompanied its ruling on the imbalance created by the President's speeches with a judgment that TV coverage of the war had been "roughly balanced." This was purely an editorial judgment, technically within the Fairness Doctrine but far outside its purposes.

If any order is ever to be created on this matter, there must be a clear differentiation of the medium's functions: TV should and doubtless will be pressed to provide more open access for political debate, but it must be left free to exercise editorial judgment and do its own independent digging into society's problems, regardless of theoretical requirements of balance. Otherwise it becomes nothing more than a conduit.

## False truce on subpoenas

On Aug. 10, Attorney General John N. Mitchell described to the American Bar Association his department's plan to allay the newsman-subpoena controversy. [See "The Subpoena Dilemma," Spring.] The concrete part of the plan was a set of guidelines; the surrounding discussion sounded conciliatory. Both the *New York Times*, which has a reporter involved in a subpoena case, and the *Washington Post*, which has filed an *amicus* brief in the case, mildly welcomed the address. One trade paper, *Publishers' Auxiliary*, even congratulated the Attorney General.

Yet the soft talk rested on an unyielding position. Moreover, because it defines officially the conflict between the press and the machinery of law enforcement, it is likely to have an enduring effect on the conflict. For journalists, the heart of the formulation does not lie in the guidelines, which merely enjoin federal prosecutors to check things out with Mr. Mitchell, but in the Attorney General's view of the causes of the conflict. It is worth quoting at length:

[I]t is the very strength of the press today—both editorial and economic—which has helped to bring on this controversy over the subpoena power.

Editorially, more and more news organizations are giving coverage to the type of controversial events which tend to come under government scrutiny.

And their news coverage of these developments has become more intense and more sophisticated. Because of their healthy economic conditions, news organizations today are willing to detach a reporter for weeks, or even months, to study one issue.

The result is that the American public is not only told about the surface news event, which may itself entail a violation of the law, but the public is also told about the planning of the event, the personalities of the major players, and the alleged motives of the group involved . . . all factors of some consequence in an investigation.

Thus, occasionally we have newsmen and photographers who are experts in a case we are investigating and who may have more information than the Government has—factual information and photographs which the Government finds difficult, if not impossible, to obtain through its investigatory agencies.

Beneath this seeming praise of the press lies a suggestion of things to come. As journalists become more thorough and penetrating, the Attorney General appears to say, they will increasingly be called to assist the Government in prosecutions. The Attorney General did not state, of course, the obverse that must occur to newsmen: if they lay off the really tough stories the Government will leave them alone.

The speech can be perused in vain, moreover, for any yielding of principle:

The government views subpoenas to the press as an authorized and proper exercise of the federal grand jury power. . . .

I believe it to be quite clear that, under the law as it stands today, there is no Constitutional or common-law privilege for the press to refuse to produce evidence requested in a properly drawn subpoena. . . .

[T]he Department of Justice acted in a completely responsible and traditional manner in arranging for subpoenas to the press.

I am struck by the intensity of the belief by newsmen that our subpoena policies are endangering their First Amendment guarantees. Of course, they are advocates for their own position.

I want to emphasize . . . that we are not in any way conceding our Constitutional and statutory power to request a court to subpoena the press, or anyone else, in any case where, in our opinion, the fair administration of justice requires it.

There is little doubt that the Attorney General would like to see the conflict eased. But are newsmen any more "advocates for their own position" than Mr. Mitchell is for his? He has placed the news media on notice that he would be happy to appease them, but on his own terms.

## Earl Caldwell's case

While the Attorney General spoke, the case of Earl Caldwell, a *New York Times* reporter, was continuing its slow movement up through the courts, accompanied by strong support from professional and civil-liberties organizations. In the spring the reporter received court support in his effort to protect information received in confi-

dence, but he was held in contempt in June for refusing to appear before a grand jury investigating the Black Panthers, even to vouch for the veracity of his published stories. Here he and the *Times* had a formal parting. Although the paper supported his successful effort to protect his sources, it did not join the appeal from the contempt citation. A memorandum to the *Times* staff explained that "when a reporter refuses to authenticate his story, the *Times* must, in a formal sense, step aside," or have doubt cast on its own integrity. (But the paper continued to provide legal and financial assistance.)

Thus Caldwell was left on his own, in a legal sense, in his contention that any closed-doors testimony would destroy his (and, by extension, society's) ability to gain information about the Panthers. Caldwell was trying to give the old confidentiality argument a new dimension—a claim that journalists, as society's auditors, must have a special independence to move freely in all parts of that society. It is a large claim, one that the Attorney General, at least, will try to veto.

## The Mark Knops case

In general, *CJR* endorses the campaign of Earl Caldwell and similarly beset colleagues to stay out of the law-enforcement machinery. But such special claims carry with them, as everybody says, special responsibilities—in this case, to see that the privileges are extended to all just claimants, not merely to a stratum of journalists.

Such is the message of the case of Mark Knops, which arose late in the summer. On Aug. 27 *Kaleidoscope*, Wisconsin underground newspaper, printed what it said was a statement from the radical group that had bombed a University of Wisconsin research building three days before, killing one person. State and federal authorities quickly issued subpoenas for Knops, the editor (the U.S. attorney in his anxiety violating the Attorney General's seventeen-day-old guidelines requiring clearance). On Aug. 30 the editor, refusing

to reveal the sources of his information, was jailed for contempt, despite testimony on his behalf by the Newspaper Guild and the editor of the *Chicago Journalism Review*.

The Knops case constituted an instant illustration of the Attorney General's reference to "controversial events which tend to come under government scrutiny." Journalists who now hesitate to come to the support of a newspaper that they may regard as professionally negligible or offensive should be warned that the Mitchell policy set no firm barriers to similar action against them. As Jules Feiffer once wrote, all our causes are such bad examples.

## Nixon on Manson

The sensation of the dog days was President Nixon's misstatement to the press in Denver about the guilt of Charles Manson. It created headlines across the country, it provoked an enormous barrage of editorials telling Mr. Nixon that he had made a terrible error; it set pundit against pundit—James Reston calling for devices to protect the President, Frank Mankiewicz and Tom Braden crying shame on Reston for trying to fool the public.

There is ample justification for criticizing the media's hair-trigger decision to publicize the President's statement. Especially when the consequences include the Los Angeles *Times* banner Manson flaunted in the courtroom. On the other hand, there is obvious risk in totally exonerating the President in the brouhaha. Especially in view of the manner in which Administration officials kicked around the eventual "clarification"—itself somewhat ambiguous.

There is nothing in the transcript of the President's meandering talk to suggest he was making a factual judgment on the Manson trial or that he was conscious of making such a judgment. On the other hand, the statement was extremely revealing of the President's temperament and thought processes—characteristics about which the

public needs to be informed. The more so as the President becomes less inaccessible to observation in unstructured situations.

Suppose the subject had not been a murder trial, but Vietnam or the Middle East? Anyone who would ask the media not to publicize a Presidential statement made in a public meeting stands on precarious ground indeed. The opportunity for prompt clarification, after all, would remain.

There are, it would seem, lessons in this incident for both the media and government. If a high official makes a somewhat shocking spontaneous statement that seems likely to influence an important event, he and his aides perforce should ask themselves whether this is what he really means, and clarify the intent by affirming or amending his statement; the press then could report the entire sequence. The media, before their rush for the phones, should pose the same questions. If the President's intent is not clear, reporters should say so. In a time when the public badly needs straightforward reporting about its leaders, anything less is a disservice.

## Two more new reviews

Since the last report in this space, newsmen in two more cities have started to publish local journalism reviews, and more are in prospect.

One of the newcomers is a tabloid called, straightforwardly enough, the *St. Louis Journalism Review* [Box 3086, St. Louis 63130; subscription \$6]. Operating under a professional editorial board, it is being issued as an independent publication by the regional magazine *Focus/Midwest*. The first issue of the *Review*, dated October/November, 1970, strikes the outsider as even-handed, comprehensive, even a little heavy. But the tone throughout is that of determined journalists who know what they want to do.

The other new review is called *The Unsatisfied Man: A Review of Colorado Journalism* [Box 18470, Denver 80218; subscription \$6]. The name comes from a quotation by the Denver newspaper

pioneer, F. G. Bonfils: "There is no hope for the satisfied man." This newsletter-size publication has rough edges in its first issue, dated September, 1970. But it has freshness of spirit and more than a hint of wit.

## The incredibles

The first text page in the August issue of *Scanlan's*, which calls itself a "plucky magazine," is headed by a line saying, "This document recently came into the hands of the editors." Below it, without further explanation, is reproduced a typewritten page with the letterhead THE VICE PRESIDENT/WASHINGTON. The page perpetuates the rumor, in circulation since spring, that the Rand Corporation had dreamed up a plan to cancel the 1972 elections. *Scanlan's* makes little effort to establish any authenticity for the document; in a news story the editors merely remarked that the item was from a source that had never misled them.

The election scheme bears a strong resemblance to the story widely disseminated after Pearl Harbor that President Roosevelt planned to cancel the 1942 elections. They were held—considerably to the disadvantage of the Democrats. The rumor was part of the effluvium of uncertain times.

Is the *Scanlan's* item anything more? In its promotion ads, the magazine offers to match its credibility against that of Mr. Agnew. It's not a choice a reader wants to make on faith alone.

## Role confusion

It is small wonder if reporters are finding that news sources sometimes mistake them for police investigators. For nearly every month brings to light more cases of police passing themselves off as journalists and, even more unfortunately, newsmen who cannot tell themselves from police.



In the former category, the *Grand Rapids Press* caught a Detroit policeman posing at a General Motors stockholders meeting as a *Press* photographer. In Washington, twenty-eight *Star* reporters wrested a promise of good behavior from the police after they threatened to expose any caught identifying himself as a journalist.

The reverse case has come up recently in connection with police raids on Black Panther headquarters. In Philadelphia, *Evening and Sunday Bulletin* reporters joined police on their presumably secret mission. In Houston, Howard Durre of radio station KULF not only went with the police but carried a shotgun and acted as a spotter. His superior defends the reporter's actions as being forced on him by the situation. But the question is whether, in either case, the reporters should have permitted themselves to jeopardize their own neutrality, not to mention that of colleagues, in the eyes of the community.

## Darts and laurels

*Dart:* to the South Bend *Tribune* for an editorial on Women's Strike for Equality Day that concluded: "The Women's Liberation leaders haven't found a way to repeal the natural law that women must bear the children, and we're not sure they know what they are doing when they tamper with the laws of man." Like much other comment at the time, the editorial bore every internal evidence of being written by a man for men's benefit—thus proving a point.

*Laurel:* to the Washington *Post* and *Evening Star*, for responding with positive staff memorandums to the Women's Liberation call to eliminate invidious clichés from news copy.

*Dart:* to Jack Anderson, for his Sept. 5 syndicated column of gossip and innuendo about the morals and family problems of Vice President Agnew's son Randy. Some newspapers, to their credit, excised the more scurrilous segments.

*Laurel:* to the *Wall Street Journal*, for venturing on Sept. 4 into still another sensitive area of newspaper practices—the effects of having newspaper executives sit on the boards of corporations. (The writer was Eric Mergenthaler.)

*Dart:* to the Los Angeles *Times*, for appropriating without credit an exposé broken by its neighbor, the San Bernardino *Sun*, as follows:

San Bernardino's mayor, police chief and a Superior Court judge vouched for a Los Angeles area Mafia figure in letters written last year to a probation officer, it was learned Friday.  
The letters were written in behalf of Joseph C. Dippolito, 56, named in letters as "Joe Dippolito."

Is the *Times'* self-esteem so scanty that it cannot afford an acknowledgement?

*Laurel:* to the *Record* of Hackensack, N.J., whose persistence in checking the credentials of a new county treasurer saved Bergen County the embarrassment New York City suffered a few years ago over the false record of a water commissioner.

*Dart:* to *Barron's*, the business weekly, for reviving the old guilt-by-letterhead technique of Joseph McCarthy days in an Aug. 17 article on consumer organizations: "Deceptive Label. There's More to Consumerism than Meets the Eye."

*Laurel:* to NBC News, for fixing public attention again, a decade after Edward R. Murrow's *Harvest of Shame*, on the problem of migrant laborers. NBC's White Paper, *Migrant*, went on the air largely intact despite pre-broadcast pressure from Coca-Cola, a large employer of migrants.

*Dart:* to whom it may concern: the *Review* has received a complaint about reporters forced to do legwork for superiors who are parttime correspondents for newsmagazines. And guess who collects the checks.

*Laurel:* to United Press International, for exposing the cut-rate automobile leases accepted from manufacturers by Congressional leaders—not a scandal, but a practice to be illuminated.



New communications technology and a mood of deep social concern usually herald an upsurge of reform journalism. This seems to be occurring now.

## Is muckraking coming back?

CAREY McWILLIAMS

■ The existence of a continuing—but cyclical—tradition of reform journalism may be taken for granted; ongoing, it seems to disappear at certain times only to surface later. There is general agreement on the major factors which gave rise to muckraking journalism in the first decade of this century: technological changes which made it possible to reach out for a new mass audience at reduced unit costs; the emergence of a large audience of high-school-educated Americans who were interested in public affairs but unable to relate to such magazines as *Harper's*, *Atlantic*, *Scribner's*, and *Century*—for “the cultivated classes.” More important, a mood of deep social concern and disaffection had emerged. The key to this mood and the political movement it brought into being was a feeling that “the system” itself might be somehow at fault. As Walter Lippmann pointed out, “The mere fact that muckraking was what the people wanted to hear is in many ways the

most important revelation of the whole campaign. There is no other way of explaining the quick approval which the muckrakers won.”

There is also general agreement on the factors which brought about the decline of muckraking. For one thing, the movement of which it was a part tended to merge with the Progressive Party. More important, the entire Progressive Movement—muckrakers and all—was eclipsed by World War I.

The turn-of-the-century muckrakers, however, had their precursors. The articles by Charles Francis Adams on the Tweed ring and “Chapters of Erie,” which appeared in the *North American Review*, helped set the stage; John Jay Chapman's *Political Nursery*, which he edited in New York in 1897-1901, was as shrewd and realistic about the sources of corruption as anything Lincoln Steffens ever wrote; and as Harvey Swados points out, much of what the muckrakers had to say was to be found in H. D. Lloyd's *Wealth Against Commonwealth*, published in 1894.

A number of newspapers had conducted some aggressive muckraking campaigns before the turn of the century. In 1896, for example, Congress was

---

Carey McWilliams is editor of the *Nation*. His article is adapted from a paper prepared for a conference on muckraking at Penn State last May.

set to consider the Funding Bill, an outrageous giveaway designed to add to the Southern Pacific's plunder. Hearst decided to fight it and to this end asked Ambrose Bierce, who was then writing a locally celebrated column for the San Francisco *Examiner*, to go to Washington and direct the campaign against the bill. Bierce accepted with alacrity, and for nearly a year directed an unremitting attack on the Southern Pacific and C. P. Huntington.

In one sense, as Swados notes, sensational or "yellow" newspaper journalism was a parallel development, but much more superficial and not so sharply focused on social issues. Then, too, the newspaper has been a basically local institution, largely dependent on local advertising and restricted to a local readership. The issues that began to concern the public at the turn of the century were largely national, and we then had no truly national newspapers.

The muckraking magazines were a distinct journalistic innovation. Taking advantage of the new technology, they cut costs, dropped the price, and reached out for the big new readership that McClure and others knew existed. They got the readership, which in turn produced the advertising. (At the turn of the century a new nationwide mass market for certain products was just emerging.) But by 1912 the pattern was clear. Once the new mass magazines had demonstrated the existence of the market, other publications moved in and, in effect, took over the invention of the pioneer muckraking journalists. The initial reform impulse abated.

Harvey Swados points out that our country recuperates from the greedy decades "almost like a repentant drunkard recovering from a debauch by trying to examine the causes of his drinking bout and by making earnest resolutions to sin no more." The difference between the nation and the drunkard, he suggests, may lie in the fact that in its moods of sober self-criticism the nation really does redress many of the wrongs, really does help those who cannot help themselves, and does thereby renew its world image as a state concerned not solely or even primarily with self-aggrandizement, but much more importantly with dignity, freedom, and decent self-respect.

Swados could get an argument on this proposition from some of today's rebels and dissenters; nevertheless I share his feeling. *Time*, on Sept. 19, 1969, took much the same position. "For reasons that seem to be rooted in the public mood," it stated, "muckraking is a cyclic form of journalism. If a society is troubled, it suspects that something is wrong with its system or its leadership; a free press responds by finding out what that is." Conversely in periods of apparent prosperity and well being, reform journalism loses its appeal, and the muckraking journalist is regarded as a spoilsport or an old-fashioned curmudgeon. The situation changes when the public—often a new public—becomes concerned over the course of events. The reform tradition never dies—there are always a few publications around to keep it alive—but it does seem to fade away at times.

The 1920s were such a period. As the great boom got under way, the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's*, after the days of Norman Hapgood, celebrated the national virtues and pieties. As James Playsted Wood points out, the reform tradition was sustained during this decade by small-circulation magazines, in some respects more radical than the muckraking monthlies—namely, the *Nation*, *New Republic*, and one or two other publications. This was a familiar role for the *Nation*; again and again it has helped sustain the reform tradition when the cycle has turned against it.

We do not ordinarily think of Mencken or the *American Mercury* as part of the reform tradition, but as James Wood notes they were—at least during the 1920s. As the muckrakers had done before him, Mencken discovered a new audience, with new tastes, new interests, new attitudes. It is worth noting that like the *Nation* and the *New Republic*, the *Mercury* was not entirely dependent on advertising revenue. Like these magazines also, the *Mercury* cultivated a new group of writers and encouraged—across the country—a healthy skepticism. In some respects, *New Masses*, founded in 1926, also helped sustain the reform tradition.

After 1929 the scene changed. The first reactions to the stock market crash were shock, disbelief, and bewilderment. Then, rather slowly, a new current of concern and anger began to form. As the decade advanced, the world crisis began

to mesh with the domestic, and pressures for change mounted. Old dogmas were questioned, and a thirst for new theories and a willingness to experiment emerged. The New Deal, of course, was a response to this mood. On the New Deal and the momentous happenings of the 1930s the press was divided—that is, owners and publishers were in general opposed to the New Deal and not inclined to rise to the challenge of the times, whereas the working press was sympathetic and did respond.

But it was not publishers alone who experienced a failure of nerve. In his *Autobiography*, published in 1931, Steffens not only said that the muckraking tradition was dead but that it had been a mistake. It had, he thought, stretched out the age of honest bunk and protracted the age of folly. He accused himself of having shared its illusions and of not realizing that muckraking was merely “a reflex of an old moral culture.”

But Steffens spoke too soon. In the early 1930s, as he was saying farewell to the muckraking tradition, Matthew Josephson wrote a series of articles for the *New Yorker* about bulls and bears in the market. It occurred to Josephson that it might be worthwhile to turn back in time and examine their prototypes. *The Robber Barons*, directly in the muckraking tradition, was published in 1934 and has been selling steadily ever since. It was followed in 1938 by *The Politicos* and in 1940 by *The President Makers*, which extended the same analysis. Books, in fact, seem to have been the prime means by which the muckraking tradition was kept alive in the 1930s, as writers sought to muckrake American history or to give in-depth reports on the state of American life. *The Grapes of Wrath* (which grew out of a San Francisco newspaper series by Steinbeck) and *Factories in the Field* made the nation vividly aware of the social consequences of large-scale industrialized farming and brought the anti-labor activities of the Associated Farmers to public attention—without much help from the press.

In the *Nation* and *New Republic*, Carleton Beals, Heywood Broun, McAlister Coleman, Lewis Gannett, Louis Adamic, and others kept the muckraking tradition very much alive. Radio also played a key role in developing mass awareness of

what was happening. Documentary films were important, as were photographs. The pamphlet, a neglected journalistic form, experienced a rebirth; the great labor organizing campaigns brought a flood of pamphlet material.

At the end of World War II we were, as William Barrett has written, “at the end of a long tunnel, there was light showing ahead, and beyond that all sorts of horizons opened.” But this bright vision was never realized; the Cold War intervened. Instead of muckraking, red-baiting journalism became the order of the day. Full of high promise, *PM*, launched in 1940, struggled valiantly, and was succeeded by the *Star*, which continued the struggle for a time and then collapsed. George Seldes carried on the old muckraking tradition brilliantly and courageously with his newsletter *In Fact*, started in the 1930s because of his feeling that the press had not responded to the needs and challenges of the 1930s. But Mr. Wood, writing in 1956, smugly reports the demise of the muckraking tradition in these words:

Magazine liberalism and iconoclasm have both declined in the years since World War II. The reasons in both instances are apparent. Most of the old idols have been smashed, and the clay feet of newer ones have not yet been identified. . . . Most of the immediate social gains have been gained, and newer causes either have not been invented or have not been formulated distinctly enough for journalistic clamor. . . .

We were confident we “had it made.” We had become so infatuated with the great god GNP that we could not see the poor and underprivileged in our midst. It took independent investigators such as Michael Harrington, Dwight MacDonald, and Herman Miller to discover them. Even after the Montgomery bus boycott touched off the civil rights rebellion, the press still failed to zero in on the urban ghettos or to sense what was happening in them. For a decade or more it had, with notable exceptions, been “fighting communism” with an intensity that largely precluded concentration on domestic realities.

In these depressing years the small-media magazines once again kept the muckraking tradition alive. While the *Nation* devoted much space to a critical analysis of Cold-War policies, it also became increasingly concerned with domestic as-

saults on civil liberties which were the counterpart of these policies. We devoted major articles to the Ted Lamb case, the Oppenheimer case, the Remington tragedy, the Hiss case, and many similar situations.

At the same time the *Nation* pioneered in application of what might be called muckraking techniques to large-scale arms spending, first in Matthew Josephson's series on "The Big Guns" in 1956 and later with Fred J. Cook's "Juggernaut: The Warfare State" in 1961. We followed this with a special issue on "The CIA" in 1962—the first hard look at that institution. Previously, in 1958, we had devoted a special issue to another *verboden* subject, "The FBI." Aside from Max Lowenthal's fine book on the Federal Bureau of Investigation—which came out in 1950 and was in effect suppressed by FBI pressure—the press had failed to take an objective, critical view of the FBI. It had also failed to take a critical view of large arms spending or the CIA. After our special issues appeared the ice was broken, and many articles appeared on these subjects.

We demonstrated the acute need for old-style muckraking in a special 1956 issue—again by Fred Cook—on "The Shame of New York," the title of which reflects its parentage. This issue led directly to a very fine series in the New York *Herald Tribune*. We ran one of the first good articles on cigarette smoking and lung cancer, by Dr. Alton Ochsner, in 1953. We insisted, in 1957 and 1961, on giving attention to the wicked suggestion that perhaps a tax might be placed on advertising. We ran the first articles by Ralph Nader to appear in an American magazine, including his 1959 article "The Safe Car You Can't Buy."

The *Nation*, however, is not a news magazine. It is a journal of critical opinion. As a publication we are not well adapted to the needs of muckraking journalism. We have a small staff and meager resources. We have no full-time writers to assign to various subjects. We are unable to finance extensive research or investigation. It was presumptuous of us to undertake such an issue as "Juggernaut: The Warfare State," or the other Fred Cook special issues. Not a penny of foundation money was used to finance these projects,

although it would have been welcome. What we did was to build up files of materials—all kinds of materials—and then turn them over to the enormously gifted, hard-working Fred Cook, who is the living embodiment of the muckraking tradition in journalism. We did something else I think is important and which other small-circulation magazines also do. We brought along many young writers: Dan Wakefield, Gene Marine, Stanley Meisler, Jennifer Cross, J. L. Pimsleur, Robert Sherrill, and many others.

Today journalism faces a new situation. The scene began to change in 1960; slowly at first, but then it began to accelerate. No journal now has a monopoly on dissent. The change has come about

---

## "Muckraking is a means of countering network news . . ."

---

as a result of the two components which have, in the past, ushered in new chapters in the cyclical history of reform journalism: new technology and new interests and concerns.

The myth of affluence was beginning to dissipate by the time President Kennedy took office. Nor was it long before a war had been declared against poverty. The acceleration of the war in Vietnam discredited "establishment" opinion. And the rebellion of blacks and students shattered the prevailing complacency. These new concerns created an enormous new market, so to speak, for a modern version of reform journalism.

In September, 1969, we ran an article by our Washington correspondent, Robert Sherrill, on "The Pendleton Brig," which illustrates the point. That article was widely quoted by the press and the wire services and was twice used by Mike Wallace on CBS. It brought a House subcommittee to Pendleton almost before you could say "brig." If that report had been published in September, 1967, it would not have attracted the



same attention. We have published tougher articles by Sherrill that received less notice. Once again, as Lippmann pointed out years ago, it is active public concern about a subject that compels the press to pay attention to it. Today new concerns, new apprehensions, new interests have ushered in a new chapter in reform journalism.

The new technology has pivoted on the emergence of television as a major news source. From rather modest beginnings, TV news has become a huge enterprise. At the same time, TV has gotten more and more advertising that formerly went to newspapers and magazines—particularly the large-circulation picture magazines. Newspaper owners have bought into TV when and where they could and, to the extent that they have succeeded, have taken a somewhat more relaxed view of the new competition. But magazines—notably those hardest hit—have begun to strike back. In general both newspapers and magazines have begun to feel that muckraking or investigative journalism is a useful means of countering network news.

Print media have certain inherent advantages in investigative reporting. Print constitutes a record that can be cited, quoted, filed, passed from hand to hand, and reprinted and distributed in large quantities. TV news is gone in a flash, and it is difficult to get transcripts of network programs. Also it is difficult to present complex situations, with facts and figures, on TV. For example, TV newsmen with whom I have spoken, including the producers of some excellent documentaries, concede that the medium has never done a truly effective exposé of the military-industrial complex. All news is perhaps a form of entertainment, but the entertainment factor is much stronger on TV than in print.

There are other limitations on TV investigative reporting. No one in the industry needs to be reminded that TV is a licensed medium—Vice President Agnew's blast only underscores the point. The Fairness Doctrine does not present much of a problem, but the "personal attack" doctrine, as evolved by the FCC, is another matter. Under this doctrine if a TV documentary refers to someone in a derogatory manner the producer is obligated to seek out this person and offer him a chance—then and there—to respond

to the statement. The mere fact that such an offer is made implies that the statement is, in some sense, derogatory. So if the person has something to hide, and is sophisticated, he will not accept the offer but will say, in effect, "run that sequence and I will sue you." This rule—which applies to documentaries, not to news—causes much distress to producers of documentaries that might be regarded as muckraking journalism. The inability of documentary producers to use concealed mikes or cameras is a further limitation.

Despite these inhibitions, some fine TV documentaries in the muckraking tradition have been made: *Biography of a Bookie*, *The Business of Heroin*, *Hunger in America*, *Health in America*, *Case History of a Rumor*, and NBC's hard look at Jim Garrison of New Orleans. But if there is a weakness in TV news it is in investigative journalism.

As it becomes increasingly difficult for the printed media to compete in "hard" news, it is not surprising to note a new interest by some newspapers in investigative reporting. Since February, 1967, *Newsday* has had an investigative team consisting of an editor (Robert Greene), three reporters, and a file clerk, who also functions as secretary and researcher. Greene had experience on the staff of the Senate Rackets Committee before he came to *Newsday*; he knows investigative techniques. The team works as a unit. It has its own files and records and a separate office. In addition to many minor stories the team has turned out about three major reports a year—each about 3,500 words—running for five days. Word of *Newsday's* enterprise has gotten around. Last year when the American Press Institute at Columbia staged its second seminar on investigative journalism attendance increased over the previous year.

The Associated Press also has set up a special assignment team, with ten reporters, under their own editor. One is a specialist in education, one in health and science; the others are all-purpose reporters. In 1969, AP reports, this team turned out 250 stories—that is, stories that were the product of investigative journalism.

One may hope that the new team of reporters at AP will remedy, to some extent, a weakness of wire service news. Again and again AP has failed



to pick up excellent articles prepared by local reporters after much hard digging and investigation. Two examples are Sanford Watzman's fine series on defense procurement and renegotiation, which appeared in the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, and Nick Kotz's excellent series for the Cowles papers on meat inspection. AP did distribute four or five key stories in the Kotz series but there were fifty or more in all. The *Nation* and *New Republic* were able to secure rewrites of some of the material, but it should have had, from the start, much wider national attention. I make it a business nowadays to scan the *Congressional Record* for series of this kind, which are often

---

*"If there is a  
problem, it exists  
with publishers . . ."*

---

inserted by a senator or representative with a special interest in the subject. I learned of the Watzman and Kotz series in this way.

The "underground" press is, to some extent, trying to exploit what it regards as the general press' reluctance to engage in investigative journalism. Many offbeat journals, hard to categorize, belong in the muckraking tradition. They include I. F. Stone's indispensable newsletter; the *Chicago Journalism Review*, which has its counterpart in Montreal's *The Last Post*; *Hard Times*; Roldo Bartimole's *Point of View*, published in Cleveland; the *Bay Guardian* of San Francisco; and newsletters such as that of the North American Conference on Latin America. FM radio and documentary films have added something to the muckraking effort. And some investigative reporting in *Life* and *Look* has been first-rate—William Lambert's *Life* article about former Justice Abe Fortas, for example.

The book remains a major resource of reform journalism, as demonstrated by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed*,

and Joseph Goulden's remarkable study of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, *Truth Is the First Casualty*. (Indeed, it is instructive to read Frank Graham, Jr.'s *Since Silent Spring*, which documents massive and often personal attacks leveled against Miss Carson by a large part of the press. *Time*, for example, denounced her book as "an emotional and inaccurate outburst" and accused the author of "putting literary skill second to the task of frightening and arousing readers." But last fall, when the Government vindicated Miss Carson by banning DDT, *Time* reported complaints that the ban was inadequate.) Moreover, the paperback revolution has added a new dimension to the book's effectiveness. In Canada, after David and Nadine Nowlan prepared an eighty-page analysis of the Spadina Expressway, computerized typesetting and offset printing enabled reproduction of their book in three weeks, for a sale price of \$1.25 a copy.

From all this, it should be apparent that the muckraking or reform tradition is very much alive in American journalism. But there is not nearly enough of it. The problem is not with personnel. We have some superb investigative reporters: Jack Nelson, Nick Kotz, Sanford Watzman, Robert Sherrill, Bernard Nossiter, Fred Cook, Morton Mintz, Richard Harris, Tom Whiteside, and many more. The problem is how the available personnel are used. Good investigative journalism takes time, money, and commitment on the part of a publisher. If there is a personnel problem it exists at this level. A few more publishers like the late William T. Evjue would be welcome.

*Business Week* in a cover article last May 2 reported that the day of the mass magazine as we have known it has passed; the "hot" magazines are those with a special relationship to their readers—that is, the selective-audience magazines, be the audience surfers, skiers, or single girls. What this means, an executive of J. Walter Thompson told *Business Week*, is "simply that print media, like everything else that is for sale, are gradually being moved into the traditional and modern marketing mold." In fact, some of the new selective-audience magazines are little more than means by which the publisher, who manufactures products related to the special interest of the maga-

## Muckraking: an agenda for the Seventies

□ Since it is acceptable—even politically and economically advantageous—to favor ecological decency, muckraking in the Seventies surely will include far deeper explorations into this cancer. Most of us must realize that we have only begun to dig beneath the surface that Rachel Carson and others scratched years ago. Thus we can anticipate, for the first time in the history of American mass media, serious examination of the structure, policies, and practices of the privately owned electric power utilities.

When the muckrakers of the Seventies explore the unconscionable pollution practiced by these companies, they are certain to see the relationship of these utilities—which exploit our natural resources for the economic benefit of a very few—to our tax problems. Journalists additionally will expose the pernicious political influence of these companies on our municipal, state, and federal governments. After that, the new muckrakers can add studies of the unwonted influence of these corporations and their agents on the university systems of several states.

The rake then might be drawn through the muck of the corruption of the legal profession, in which large numbers of lawyers become beholden to or fearful of the corporations. From there it is a logical step to a reappraisal of our courts, our judges, our entire judicial system.

While examining our courts, we unquestionably will see how black men and brown men and red men and poor white men fare in the dispensing of justice. Then we should stare at our black ghettos—a sight uncovered for large numbers of shocked and disbelieving whites only in the last decade. And move on to those red ghettos—the reservations. (One of the most singularly unsuccessful and inexcusably insensitive agencies of government is the Bureau of Indian Affairs.) And one could dwell at length on the peonage—literally—of Mexican-Americans in several areas of the West and Southwest.

In the causes and the cures of poverty one could find, as they say, a wealth of material. Onward and downward to the urban decay and ugliness, to crime, to drugs (hard and soft; addictive and non-addictive).

Much undoubtedly will be done to expose and clarify problems of public transportation. Muckraking will delve into our systems of education—public and private, elementary and secondary, undergraduate and graduate. Especially will the relationship between the universities and the federal government be explored. The Mafia—or whatever name one prefers for organized, syndicated crime—will come under steady, penetrating attack. Next the police. Police bribery. Police corruption. Police brutality. The jails. The prisons. (Even Chief Justice Burger is upset about conditions in our

jails and prisons.) The unspeakable military prisons.

There is reason to prophesy reopening of some of the closed cases of assassination in the U.S. (No less an authority than former President Johnson now is on record as expressing doubts about the Warren Commission report, as of the censored Cronkite-Johnson interview of last May.) Similarly the peculiar circumstances surrounding the murders of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and George Lincoln Rockwell never have been sufficiently explored.

The agenda further will include the practices of slumlords and real estate agencies whose record and potential for inflicting misery is one of many shames of our cities. As time passes, the rape of Alaska by oil companies also will come under scrutiny.

Muckraking will concentrate heavily on U.S. foreign policy: for instance, the secret deployment of American nuclear weapons overseas. That would lead directly to an examination of the role of the U.S. Government and its agents in the death of democracy in Greece. *Ad infinitum*.

At the same time, attention will be turned to the control exercised over our policies and our lives by the military, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the other secret agencies of government. This will involve reappraisal of the \$80 billion a year now poured into the Pentagon at the expense of our national capacity to deal with internal social problems.

The 1970s, from the evidence, will be the golden age of muckraking, except that we will call it by another name: news reporting. The Seventies will see the television networks regularly and consistently committed to muckraking. And the film. The cinema of relevance is yet another reason that the print media will be forced to abandon outmoded and essentially irrelevant patterns of news coverage.

Muckraking will become an ultimately crucial factor in the second American revolution because control of the content of the orthodox media will begin to be wrested from the publishers and taken over by trained journalists who have some sense of fairness, justice, and—finally—news values. What will come, it seems to me, is the recognition by working journalists that they are part of the problem when they should be part of the solution.

NATHAN BLUMBERG

---

Dr. Blumberg, who resigned as dean of the University of Montana School of Journalism in 1968 to return to fulltime teaching and research, is a visiting professor in journalism at the University of California, Berkeley.

zine, can advertise these products. Newspapers, of course, could step into the breach. But will they? And how long will they be able to compete with TV for lucrative advertising accounts?

Another limitation is the libel laws, which, although they have been somewhat relaxed, still warn publications—particularly small-circulation publications—away from important subject matter. It has been my experience that individuals and corporations will threaten—and actually sue—small journals of opinion when they would hesitate to threaten or sue the *New York Times* for the same material. On occasion I have arranged for authors to testify before Congressional committees to get stories before the public simply because a publication such as the *Nation* cannot afford the luxury of winning a libel action. About a year ago we were sued for libel and the case was thrown out—but it cost us \$7,500 to win.

Despite these difficulties, muckraking journalism seems to be staging a comeback. Today we have foundations that will occasionally underwrite the kind of research and travel that investigative journalism often requires. New technologies continue to push the press toward more and

better investigative reporting. And on the horizon are a bewildering variety of greater technological possibilities of the kind Ralph Lee Smith discussed in the *Nation's* recent special issue, "The Wired Nation."

Leon Trotsky, like Lincoln Steffens, thought that criticism of existing institutions accomplished very little and that its chief function was to serve as "a safety valve for mass dissatisfaction." No doubt it does serve this function. But it is or should be a historical constant in any society that aspires to achieve a more rational social order.

Reform journalism can be effective. But its effectiveness has come to depend, now more than ever, on how searching it is and the extent to which it relates the part to the whole, the symptom to the cause. Reform journalists may not be "movers and shakers," but they do edge the world along a bit, they do get an innocent man out of jail occasionally, and they do win a round now and then—sometimes a significant round. A wealth of journalistic experience and much social wisdom is reflected in the title of George Seldes' book: *Never Tire of Protesting*. We never should.

## Tuneful chimes department

**Christmas Club**  
a Corporation  
ORGANIZER OF THE CHRISTMAS CLUB PLAN  
350 MADISON AVENUE  
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10017

FOR RELEASE  
October 30, 1969

CHRISTMAS CLUB SAVINGS AGAIN TOP 2 BILLION

Those tuneful chimes that will be sounding out all over America during the next few weeks won't be jingle bells—they'll be cash registers ringing as 16,015,000 (a record number) members of the country's largest club, Christmas Club, begin spending a good portion of their savings, \$2,218,672,000 for a better Christmas for their families and loved ones.

This record amount is an average of \$139.00 per member—the highest ever recorded according to Christmas Club a Corporation, the organization that originated the savings plan in 1910.

A survey of Christmas Club members shows that over 900,000 of

—News release, Christmas Club, Oct. 30, 1969.

**Christmas clubs  
release record \$8**

By KENNETH F. SPARROW  
Business Editor

Those tuneful chimes that will be sounding out throughout Greater Syracuse during the next few weeks won't be jingle bells—they will be cash registers.

They will be ringing because more than 62,000 members of Christmas clubs will begin spending a good portion of their savings—\$8,631,952—for a better Christmas for their families and loved ones.

This year's pay-out to club members is the largest on record. It exceeds the previous high of \$8,502,954 set last year by \$128,998.



—Syracuse Herald American, Nov. 9, 1969.

## Why we lack a national press council

Behind the drive for a nationwide ethics/grievance committee: how it began, why it is resisted, why publishers ultimately may have to accept it.

NORMAN E. ISAACS

■ For me, it all began with the stress on "good news" in the worrisome, penny-pinching days of the Great Depression. As a young, still untutored reporter in Indianapolis I found it hard to understand why stories about job layoffs should be relegated to short spaces inside the newspaper and why any prediction by any business spokesman about better things to come was almost certain to appear on page 1. As I learned more about newspaper shortcomings and oversights, I swiftly became aware that concerns about newspaper performance were being expressed in many places. It was infuriatingly common to hear the line, "You can't believe what you read in the newspapers."

I also learned a bit about publishers. Young newsmen of that era were impressed and fretful about the surging growth of radio and of *Time* magazine, which had been launched in 1923 by two twenty-four-year-old newspapermen, Briton Hadden and Henry Luce. But the publishers and editors were scornful of these intruders. We young

reporters felt humiliated in 1935 when the American Newspaper Publishers Association bitterly opposed the proposed Child Labor Amendment. The publishers wanted laissez-faire for themselves in the use of youngsters to deliver newspapers and they had not the slightest hesitancy about falling back on the First Amendment. There was also what we considered disgraceful opposition to the Wages-Hours Act in its applications to newspapers; there was long and tendentious argument before a compromise was reached, fixing newspaper executive salaries at \$36.

Hence it was little wonder that we perked up in early 1943 when it was announced that Henry Luce had given \$200,000 and *Encyclopaedia Britannica* \$15,000 for a study into the state of the press and the prospects for its continued freedom. We were buoyed also by the fact the study would be run by Robert M. Hutchins, the lively chancellor of the University of Chicago. We turned resentful later when it was disclosed that Dr. Hutchins had named to the Commission on Freedom of the Press only scholars and had failed to choose even one journalist.

We should have had enough sense, of course, to recognize the capacities of men like Zechariah Chafee of Harvard; John M. Clark of Columbia;

---

Mr. Isaacs, longtime Louisville *Courier-Journal* and *Times* editor and immediate past president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, now is Editor in Residence at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism.



Harold Lasswell of Yale; Archibald MacLeish, who was not only a poet of distinction but had served as an Assistant Secretary of State; Reinhold Niebuhr of the Union Theological Seminary; Beardsley Ruml, then chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank in New York; and the senior Arthur Schlesinger of Harvard. Whatever suspicions I had nurtured vanished the moment I read "A Free and Responsible Press," the Hutchins report, in 1947. I was tremendously impressed and moved.

My publisher, Elzey Roberts, was outraged by the report. Even though his St. Louis *Star-Times* was one of the few liberal newspapers in the country, Roberts' visceral reaction was like that of at least 95 per cent of his fellow publishers. Up to then, Hutchins had been one of the most influential and effective of citizens; within a year his public standing had been shredded by the distortions of editorial vilification.

What was the heinous crime of which the Commission was guilty? In essence, all it had pleaded for was a press both responsible and accountable. It felt that freedom of the press, while not in immediate peril, was endangered in the long run by the growing crisis in society. The Commission appealed for a moral approach to journalism, saying, "There is a point beyond which failure to realize the moral right will entail encroachment by the state on the existing legal right." While it cast aspersions on the economic structure of communications, the Commission's great sin was in recommending the establishment "of a new and independent agency to appraise and report annually upon the performance of the press." It was a sweeping concept.

Even now—twenty-three years later—people like me who applauded the report feel that the Commission went too far in the task it envisioned for the new agency, which was to be independent of both press and government. It was fine in stipulating that the new body "help the press define workable standards of performance," it was farsighted in wanting "inquiries in areas where minority groups are excluded from reasonable access to the channels of communication," it proposed to serve journalism better in conducting "a continuous appraisal of governmental action affecting communications," it was in proper but

risky territory in advocating the investigating of instances of "press lying, with particular reference to persistent misrepresentation of the data required for judging public issues." But the Commission clearly strayed afield when it looked ahead to seeking ways of "supplying service where it is lacking or to provide alternative service where the drift toward monopoly seems dangerous." Unfortunately, because of the fury of the publishers, the nobly worded constructive portions of the report were foredoomed to join the frivolous segments on shelves reserved for small, unobtrusive reference books. [See "The Hutchins Report: A Twenty-Year View," Summer, 1967.]

But the need remained for some kind of agency to appraise press performance, or at least to consider grievances against it. For a yawning credibility gap was widening year by year. Less than twelve months after the Hutchins report, for example, there was widespread disillusionment about coverage of the Truman-Dewey campaign. The denouement of that race, of course, was the photograph of the beaming Harry Truman holding aloft an early edition of the *Chicago Tribune* reporting Thomas Dewey's "victory." To its vast embarrassment, the great preponderance of the country's press simply had refused to believe—and report—what its reporters were seeing and hearing: that the "silent majority" of that day were following Truman's campaign and turning out for him. (During the campaign, when a top Kansas City political reporter incredulously told St. Louis colleagues that the "Boot Heel" part of Missouri was Truman country and he was urged to write it, he replied, "My God, no. I'd be laughed out of the state.")

Retrospective unhappiness over 1948, however, turned to professional anger in the 1952 campaign. Adlai Stevenson made his bitter comment about a "one-party press." There were evidences of gross slanting in news columns. The anger surfaced at the 1953 national convention of Sigma Delta Chi. There Irving Dilliard, editor of the editorial page of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, who had been making challenging speeches around the country about one-sidedness, showed as one of his most telling exhibits a copy of the *Indianapolis News* page 1, made up as a billboard for an



appearance by General Eisenhower in that city. The society voted for an investigation of the press' conduct. I was not at the convention, nor did I take part in the public debates. But I was chosen to head the SDX Ethics Committee charged with conducting the examination.

The assignment was not unwelcome. Since 1947, mainly through the Associated Press Managing Editors Association and to lesser degree within the American Society of Newspaper Editors, I had been increasingly involved in the movement for self-examination by newsmen, and principally for higher ethical standards and practices.

(The issue of internal criticism had been one of the chief motivations for the reorganization of APME in 1948. Though the group had been largely a docile appendage of AP, some "young Turks" were pushing for more far-reaching activity. Among the leaders were Kenneth MacDonald of the *Des Moines Register & Tribune*, Lee Hills of the *Knight Newspapers*, and William P. Steven of the *Minneapolis Star & Tribune*. I had shared their ardor for "action," and quickly joined the movement. After the 1947 meeting, Kent Cooper—for a quarter of a century AP's famed general manager and executive director, who now was facing retirement against his will—advanced the idea of an independent APME. He had incorporation papers drawn up specifically barring publishers from membership, and some twenty of us were among the incorporators of APME, Inc. Out of this came a glowing decade for the "Continuing Studies," the first mass self-examination project in American journalism. They were of varying quality and importance, but they provided individual editors with the opportunity to challenge both specific story coverage and also raise questions of news policy and emphasis.)

The SDX election-coverage study turned out to be both fascinating education and a harrowing experience. What was clearly needed was some kind of intelligent method of assessing performance. It called for study by research experts. "Seed money" for this phase came from the Fund for the Republic, then associated with the Ford Foundation. Raymond B. Nixon of the University of Minnesota and Chilton R. Bush of Stanford collaborated in bringing together virtually

every top academic research specialist. Out of this consultation came a moderate, though far-reaching, proposal. It was agreed that it was impossible to pass judgment on election coverage after the fact. The proposal, therefore, was for a widespread on-the-scene study of the 1956 Presidential campaign.

Safeguards were scattered all through the projected study. Editorial pages, columns, and cartoons were to be disregarded. The exploration was to involve merely basic fairness of news coverage. The difficulties of gathering information were to be weighed. Edition schedules were to be taken into account. No judgment was to be passed without direct consultation with the editors involved. The cost was estimated at \$700,000.

Repeated consultation with foundation executives made it clear there was no hope of a grant unless at least a majority of the nation's publishers saw merit in the proposal. This meant selecting a list to be polled. It should come as no surprise that one can question fewer than seventy individuals and cover all the major newspaper properties in the United States, as well as many middle-size and smaller ones. After all, when one questions a chain owner, he ticks off a good many big-city dailies in one call. But there is no need to dwell on detail. Only seventeen publishers in the country voted "yes" to having their newspapers studied for fairness during the 1956 campaign. The remainder voted "no"—a number of them vehemently.

It was clear that most of those who owned American newspapers were determined to resist self-examination. I had to conclude that they would not take the slightest step without the greatest of pressures being exerted upon them.

By 1960, however, it turned out that the Sigma Delta Chi experience had not been entirely an exercise in futility. The New England Society of Newspaper Editors voted to have that fall's Presidential campaign coverage studied, and I became chairman of the special committee. Because there were almost no expense funds, it had to be a limited study. Sevellon Brown, then editor of the *Providence Journal and Bulletin* and NESNE president, helped as he could. My colleagues were the late Carl Lindstrom of the Hart-

ford *Times* and Ted Rowse of the Washington *Post*, who had written the book *Slanted News*. After considerable thought, we decided to focus on the handling of two stories.

One story was about official Roman Catholic church opposition in Puerto Rico to the election bid of Governor Luiz Muñoz-Marin because of his statements on birth control. The other had to do with a reported loan to Richard Nixon's

---

## "A yawning credibility gap was widening year by year . . ."

---

brother by Howard Hughes. Our reasoning was that if there was going to be any bias in news presentation, including overplays or underplays, it was most likely to show up in these two stories. We thought the first story more likely to capture attention because of the heavy Roman Catholic population in New England and the past attention to birth control, plus the fact Senator Kennedy was a Catholic. The other story stemmed from a Drew Pearson column implying possible future favoritism for Hughes, who was involved in several cases with the Government. AP and UPI had picked up the story, and we felt its handling might disclose bias.

The result startled us. The election coverage in New England newspapers—with only two exceptions—was casual, erratic, and at times incomprehensible. Our report concluded that the general performance had been "so slapdash as to give an impression of bias," even though we could pinpoint none. It was an indictment of newspapering simply on the issue of inadequate news coverage.

Newspaper attainment of accuracy depends on deskmen as well as on reporters. One story told over and over is that of teachers at a Newspaper in the Classroom session in Louisville. Questions and answers flowed smoothly until one woman arose to say: "I have great respect for the

*Courier-Journal* and the *Times*. But something bothers me. I really haven't had a great deal of experience with it—perhaps five or six times. But each time I've known anything about an event, there's been something wrong with the stories."

"Such as what?" came the quick challenge.

"Well," she said, "such as the paper reporting the meeting being in the wrong place . . . or the time being wrong . . . or the names of the people being wrong, or misspelled. Little things, I know. But all wrong, and it makes me wonder how much more accurate all the other stories are about what goes on around the world."

There was a long silence while I looked out the window at the University of Louisville, and then came the most telling remark about my calling that I have ever had to make: "You know, I have to agree. It has been true of almost every story I have ever been involved in personally. The fellows at the office know how much I hate to have my speeches covered. We try so hard to be right. It's the one goal all of us have. And we fail so often. We've got to do more about it than we have done."

Barry Bingham was trying to do something more when he appeared before Sigma Delta Chi in Norfolk in 1963 and proposed the creation of local press councils. He had thought it out carefully and listed the ingredients he thought a council should contain. These included a representative group of a community's citizens, but specifically excluded government officials or political spokesmen of any party. In its purest sense, he was urging local grievance committees which could accept public complaint against the newspapers, study them, ask the editors questions if they so desired, and issue reports on press performance when and if they wished. We tried everything we could at the time to induce Louisville citizens to move on the suggestion. None was so inclined, and we were unwilling to sponsor one on our own, believing that this would properly be considered window-dressing.

The seed did not fall entirely on barren ground. Ben Bagdikian had become president of the Mellett Fund. This consisted of stock left to the American Newspaper Guild by Lowell Mellett of the Washington *Daily News* to "stimulate re-

sponsibility in the press while maintaining freedom." It seemed to Bagdikian that local press councils offered just such an opportunity. In 1967 the Mellett Fund offered financing through university sources for press councils in four smaller cities: Bend, Ore.; Redwood City, Calif.; and Sparta and Cairo, Ill. [See "Local Press Councils: An Informal Accounting," Spring, 1969.]

The Cairo experiment was the only outright failure. "The trouble there," says Bagdikian, who now is national editor of the *Washington Post*, "was that the community's whites wouldn't even sit down to talk with the blacks." The other three turned out to be less than press councils, but nevertheless highly successful. They opened communication between the editors and the citizens on a regular face-to-face basis. Redwood City's effort ran smoothly, but has now been discontinued. Bend, where the *Bulletin* is a daily, and Sparta, which has a weekly newspaper, continue because the publishers in those cities like the idea of informal monthly meetings for frank discussions.

Based on the success in the three smaller cities, the Mellett Fund stretched the move to two major centers, Seattle and St. Louis. Both of these called for a university professor to serve as chairman, to seek systematic examination of facets of news coverage, and to reach out into community problems. The St. Louis experiment is moribund. Only one newspaper was sufficiently interested to take part, and the project itself, Bagdikian reports, was "too unstructured." The Fund learned a lot from the experience, he says.

Seattle is a different story. Henry McLeod, managing editor of the *Seattle Times*, calls it "immensely useful." The Seattle council has been a movement tapping the Negro community. After a few bristling sessions about the newspapers and TV and radio stations in Seattle, the meetings have become educationally beneficial for both sides. There has been examination of the handling of trials in Seattle, and some regular testing of community attitudes. "I do believe," says Bagdikian, "that the existence of the Seattle council has avoided serious trouble for that city." Reports of the editors and the electronic journalists seem to bear this out.

For some months, Philip Geyelin, editorial page editor of the *Washington Post*, has published informative editorial comment on misplays within the communication field, heading these FYI. Now the *Post* has moved further with the appointment of an assistant managing editor in charge of oversight, and some of the early results are encouraging. A yearlong feud between the Honolulu *Star-Bulletin* and the city administration came to an end early this year when a Honolulu media

---

## "Vice President Agnew has capitalized on serious weaknesses . . ."

---

council came into being, under the chairmanship of Dr. Harland Cleveland, president of the University of Hawaii. And in Milwaukee, there has been the unusual development of a TV station (WITI-TV) carrying an editorial calling for an end to the long battle between the *Milwaukee Journal* and Mayor Henry Maier. It was unusual because of news organizations' reluctance over many years to offer public criticism about one another, even when desperately needed.

"It takes two to tango," commented the TV station. "The *Journal* Company has every right to editorialize against the Mayor, but it is also perpetuating this feuding. . . . If the Mayor and the *Journal* want to fight, let them do it in the backroom. Other media want no part of this time-wasting. Neither does the public."

Publishers and editors around the United States, however, paid scant attention to these experiments or to the Louisville newspapers' appointing an ombudsman to receive complaints on news coverage. It has been business-as-usual for the press, even though it has been increasingly obvious that the tinder pile has been growing more rapidly. Joseph McCarthy and Governor George Wallace tried putting the match to it, but it didn't burst into flames. There is now some reason to believe they left it smoldering, ready

for Vice President Agnew to ignite it.

If the polls are correct—and I do not challenge them—journalism cannot continue to sweep the idea under the rug. One fairly recent Gallup Poll reported that only 37 per cent of the public feels newspapers deal fairly on political and social issues. Some 45 per cent think newspapers unfair. Listed as not sure were 18 per cent. It is significant that the more highly educated the person questioned, the stronger the feeling that newspapers are unfair.

Vice President Agnew has capitalized on serious weaknesses in journalism. (And it is notable that much of Agnew's editorial backing comes from newspapers whose owners and editors are bitterly opposed to any thought of self-examination.) I considered and still consider the Agnew attacks a form of intimidation of the press. Though his more recent approaches stress "sensible authority," it is not inconceivable that a drive for "sensible authority" could be stretched to the creation of an overview agency by government ostensibly to preserve and protect the First Amendment freedoms. Far better, I hold, for the press to create its own protections.

Our troubles in 1968 began well before the Democratic convention. Pierre Salinger had screamed "foul" to ASNE over the Indianapolis *Star's* carving on a New York *Times* editorial to serve its anti-Kennedy purpose. [See "The Indiana Primary and the Indianapolis Newspapers," Summer, 1968.] Salinger sent a wire on a Sunday demanding instant investigation and a public report before Tuesday's primary. Vincent S. Jones, ASNE president, rejected Salinger's thrust as a political ploy. But Jones thought it bad journalism and made clear to associates he would have put the matter to the Board if Salinger had invoked the ASNE Code of Ethics. In mid-May Salinger sent Jones a more thoughtful letter, saying:

[If] ASNE is unwilling to look into the practices of its own members, then who will? Certainly, you would be among the first to admit that the government cannot do this, and that it has to be done by the industry itself.

Chicago was in the offing. That story needs no replaying here. What does bear repeating is the

response of the public to what it saw on its TV screens and read in its newspapers—the flood of protests all adding up to the fact people did not believe what they were seeing and hearing.

I believe it fair to question whether we of journalism hadn't been inviting this kind of public response. Each time wise, thoughtful men had asked us as a profession to look into our standards and our practices we had taken refuge in the First Amendment. At various times some of us had challenged publishers' concepts of that Amendment. We had held that it had been written to protect the free expression of opinion, that under it the patriots of early America had created their own underground press. There was nothing in the First Amendment, we had said, that gave a man with a printing press the right to exert a stranglehold on a community's lifeline of information. The press had ignored university poll reports of years ago that showed teen-agers believing that newspapers ought to be under firmer control. We needed to be rebuilding faith in the American press; the shrugging off of inaccuracy and slanting in news columns was the most dangerous course we could follow. An ethics or grievance committee—or, if you will, a press council—seemed to be an effective way to deal with the situation.

What might a grievance committee or press council, under proper auspices, be constituted to do, and how might it do it? Those of us who have been studying the issue believe it should be set up to consider and pass upon serious complaints charging deliberate distortions, unfairness, or grossly inadequate or misleading coverage of news. Clearly, a first requirement ought to be that a complainant must have sought redress and failed to get it from the newspaper. The system of a complainant's waiving the right to use Council findings in a libel suit has been so successfully used by the British Press Council that this concept ought to be adapted to our own uses. There might be panels of editors set up around the country to assess complaints in their regions. All of the discussions have emphasized that there should not be any enforcement powers; that all that is necessary is the expression of approval or disapproval. At the outset, such an agency could well expect a flood of complaints of little or no



substance. These can be promptly disallowed or screened out, as has been the case in Britain. William Dickinson of the Philadelphia *Bulletin* has predicted that within a short time there would be only a handful of cases serious enough for investigation and action.

Most of those who oppose press councils on a rational rather than emotional basis customarily raise two warnings. One is the potential impairment of an editor's freedom of action through community pressure as brought through a council. The other is that councils open the door to the licensing of journalists. Erwin Canham of the *Christian Science Monitor* has long held a dour view of licensing. He has argued that a majority given the right to pass on the credentials for a professional might easily be led to deny the right of expression to one with whom they disagreed strongly.

Earlier this year the issue was raised anew by Dr. W. Walter Menninger in a National Press Club speech. Dr. Menninger's comments arose out of his service on the Commission on Violence. Later, in a talk in his hometown, Topeka, Kan., he clarified his remarks. Concerning licensing, he said:

The phenomenon of the eye of the beholder was dramatically demonstrated in the reactions of some members of the media to the National Press Club address, which included a suggestion of standards for journalists in the form of certification or licensure. While a number of journalists responded thoughtfully and nondefensively, many responded with defensive protestation and emphatic rejection. . . .

What were the provocative comments? "A time-honored question in a free society is, Who shall guard the guards? Freedom of the press is the only guarantee of the Bill of Rights which cannot be exercised by each individual citizen. Practically speaking, this privilege can be exercised only by those in the journalistic profession. . . . In other professions with a public trust—medicine, law, education—laws for licensure and certification assure the public that the practitioner has fulfilled minimum standards, met certain requirements for training and demonstrated competence in the profession. The public is entitled to similar safeguards in the quality of the practitioners of this most important cornerstone in our democratic society, the news media."

Obviously, the thought of "licensing" springs from my medical background. Thus I may have

chosen the wrong word to emphasize a concern about professional standards in journalism. It is clear that certification or licensure doesn't guarantee competent performance of professionals. It does no more than assure the public that practitioners have met minimum standards. And there are undoubtedly many legal, constitutional, and procedural problems that would make certification or licensure of journalists by law well nigh impossible. Ideally the question of standards is a matter for the professional journalists to address, but the public has a right to be deeply concerned about these standards.

Dr. Menninger quite justifiably could not resist the temptation to remark about the statement by Sigma Delta Chi's professional development committee in 1966 that "the time has arrived—it is long overdue, in fact—for the profession of journalism to establish its minimum standards, announce them to the public, and begin enforcing them." Dr. Menninger noted that the proposal had been rejected by the SDX convention and then delivered a tap on our professional Achilles' heel: "It is fascinating to note that none of the discussion of this rejection was reported in the media, despite the presence of the media and their reporting of other convention activities."

As to pressures which might be brought on editors through press councils, the opponents of such proposals often quote the eloquent J. Russell Wiggins, former executive editor of the *Washington Post*, who has said:

The committee might become in many cities the channels through which the very worst special-interest groups would bring pressures to suppress or withhold news. They might make the collective opinion of the community irresistible at the very moment when that opinion was the most misguided and most in need of contradiction and restraint. . . . The real danger of such committees, of course, is that they might make the press even more subservient to the mores of the community and more than ever the prisoner of the Establishment.

At the risk of sounding cynical, most newsmen can swiftly point out that most middle-sized and smaller newspapers are already, to some degree, prisoners of "the establishment." Although there was a substantive degree of compassionate judgment involved, Wiggins was himself victim at one point of his newspaper's vulnerability to "estab-



lishment" pleas. One must also include as parallel victim the Washington *Star*.

This instance concerned the arrest of Walter Jenkins, President Johnson's assistant. The request for "consideration" was made to the editors of Washington's newspapers by former Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas. The story had been confirmed by reporters in the morning. That day's editions of the *Star* contained no mention of the arrest. The *Post* published nothing of its own, nor had it moved to do so, until UPI carried a story on its wires. None of us in American journalism can claim to have been without guilt, at some point or another, of accommodating ourselves to our communities at some moment of particular stress—or, perhaps, to some individual case, poor or rich, as the episode might have been. I raise the awkward matter of the Jenkins case with full sympathy for all the editors involved simply as an honest offset for Wiggins' fears of what dangers a council might bring in the way of exerting pressures on editors.

By April, 1969, when the wheels of time had ground me into the presidency of ASNE, one of my main goals was to establish a grievance committee. Vincent Jones, vice president and execu-

---

### *"At some point a proposal must be put before the press . . ."*

---

tive editor of the Gannett chain and my predecessor as head of ASNE, became chairman of the small, select committee to try to work out the grievance idea. Committee members were Barry Bingham; John S. Knight, chief of the Knight properties; Otis Chandler of the Los Angeles *Times*; the youngest of the ASNE members, James Hoge, Jr., of the Chicago *Sun-Times*; and the present-day sage of Great Plains journalism, William Allen White's protégé Whitley Austin of the *Salina Journal*. Robert U. Brown of *Editor & Publisher* had helped counsel in the selection of

the small group, and *E & P* carried a careful supporting editorial about the effort.

At no point in the ASNE's consideration of grievance machinery has the subject of licensing of journalists been given the slightest consideration. Nor has the possibility of pre-publication pressure entered the picture because this was never the intent. All the effort has been the other way: to establish a means by which a citizen or organization with a complaint of substance against a newspaper could appeal for hearing. From the outset it has been made clear that there is not the slightest interest in the trivia of what we might call civic-club pressures, or in the small omissions which occur daily as a result of space pressures in daily journalism. The thrust was summed up well in the statement by Jones when he first assumed the chairmanship in April, 1969:

Our assignment is to ask whether the Society needs a new definition of purpose; whether, in keeping with the noble sentiments of the preamble of our constitution and the widely admired Code of Ethics, the Society should be able to speak firmly and clearly for the best in American journalism, to set standards of behavior and performance, and to function as the top leadership of our profession.

In the labors to find the key to unlock the door to approval by the ASNE Board, Jones's committee went through a series of changes. The first group (named earlier) served until a meeting in London last fall. Knight and Chandler asked then to be relieved because of the press of business and they were replaced by William Dickinson of the *Bulletin* and Warren Phillips of the *Wall Street Journal*.

The London meeting was the regular fall board meeting. It was called in England to give the members opportunity to examine the workings of the British Press Council. Many arrangements were made by H. Philip Levy, counsel for the International Publishing Corp. (the *Mirror* newspapers) and author of the definitive book *The Press Council*. A small group of us drove far into the lovely English countryside to have a luncheon meeting with Lord Devlin, who as chairman of the Press Council was credited with a great deal of its success. One thing we learned at this session was of Lord Devlin's introduction of the waiver proce-

## Foreign press councils

□ There are more than a dozen so-called press councils around the world, most of them variants on the basic themes of upholding professional standards, serving as a type of ombudsman for public complaints, and ostensibly protecting journalistic freedoms. The oldest council is in Sweden, dating back to 1916. Last November it broadened its original scope with the addition of two public members of the board, the appointment of a press ombudsman operating under the council, and the adoption of symbolic fines.

According to Paul Frisch, secretary to the Swedish council, there are no set rules for judging press behavior. "The board considers whether the behavior of a paper has or has not been in keeping with good newspaper practice," he has reported. "The board is guided not by rules, but by what it considers a qualified opinion." He said that if the board's judgment goes against a newspaper, it would be fined 500 Swedish crowns (\$100) the first time and an additional 500 crowns for each time thereafter, up to a maximum of 2,000 crowns (\$400) in any one year. Frisch said no decision has yet been made on use of the money, but one suggestion is to apply it to a fund for scholarships.

The second oldest council is Switzerland's, which came into existence in 1938. These two were purely voluntary organizations launched by the press in what we can only term urbane, sophisticated countries.

Of the others, it is evident that the journalists of South Africa, West Germany, and India did not adopt their press councils willingly. South Africa's press had faced the alternative of "statutory discipline." West Germany's publishers decided the time had come when the Interior Ministry at Bonn announced its own plans for a council. India's council, patterned on the British model, is described in that country as "voluntary"—an obvious semantic ploy for an overview statutory board created by the federal parliament. Less is known about the councils in Turkey and South Korea, other than the fact both contain lay members on the boards as well as newsmen.

There are five other councils. Two are in Italy and the Netherlands. These two have nothing to do with publishers, confine their activities to the professional standards of journalists. The reverse is true in Denmark and in West Germany's magazine council. These two apply themselves only to publishers and have nothing to do with the working newsmen.

Then there is the British Press Council. It grew out of a demand for a formal inquiry into press performance by a royal commission. The demand had been made by the National Union of Journalists and, after debate in the House of Commons, a sweeping motion was adopted in 1946. It read:

That, having regard to the increasing public concern at the growth of monopolistic tendencies in

the control of the press and with the object of furthering the free expression of opinion through the press and the greatest practicable accuracy in the presentation of news this House considers that a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into the finance, control, management, and ownership of the press.

This first Royal Commission report was handed to Parliament in June, 1949. Many times the size of the Hutchins report, it went into specific detail about the nation's newspapers and cited many instances of inaccurate and biased coverage. At one point, the commission termed a *Daily Express* account of an important speech by U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall "a travesty." At another, it singled out a headline and noted, "the words in the headline do not occur (in the news account): they are an inference masquerading as quotation." There were scores of such pointblank citations.

The British Royal Commission differed from the Hutchins report in its recommendation for an oversight agency. It called for a "General Council of the Press consisting of at least twenty-five members representing proprietors, editors, and other journalists, and having lay members amounting to about 20 per cent of the total, including the chairman." The goals set forth included safeguarding the freedom of the press and improving methods of recruitment, training, and education. The key passage dealt with censure. It called for "censuring undesirable types of journalistic conduct, and by all other possible means, to build up a code in accordance with the highest professional standards. In this connection it should have the right to consider any complaints which it may receive about the conduct of the press or of any persons toward the press, to deal with these complaints in whatever manner may seem to be practicable and appropriate, and to include in its annual report any action. . . ."

The proprietors of the British press dug in for resistance. Only another threatening move in the House of Commons brought the first meetings of the "General Council" in 1953. There were endless, aimless debates. Then, the House of Commons put to work a second Royal Commission, headed by Lord Shawcross. In 1962, the Shawcross report advocated a new constitution for the Press Council; in 1963, the House approved; and on January, 1964, the new Council began work under the chairmanship of Lord Devlin. This is the Council which, for all its shortcomings and lack of enforcement powers, is widely regarded as the model for affording the reading public at least a fair hearing.

N.E.I.

dure, under which the Council declined to accept any serious complaint against a newspaper unless the complainant signed a waiver stipulating that none of the Council's investigative findings could be used in legal action against the newspaper. A quid pro quo was that the editor of the newspaper concerned signed a note agreeing to publish the Council's findings.

Lord Devlin was proud of what had been accomplished under the waiver, and we were to find the leading English publishers and editors agreeing thoroughly. Indeed, the statement was made several times by editors that the waiver had undoubtedly reduced the number of libel actions against newspapers. There was not the slightest doubt that the majority of British journalists were in favor of the Council's work. Indeed, in June, 1969, the *UK Press Gazette* had published a survey showing that 86 per cent of newspapermen questioned thought that the spreading of the Press Council movement throughout the world desirable.

At this point, some of us were misled into a euphoric state. What we had seen, what we had been told, and our board discussions all seemed to point to an early, favorable decision by the Board to approve a grievance committee. I agreed to call a special meeting in Chicago to receive a new, specific report from the Jones committee. All of this was said publicly and was reported. Stanford Smith, general manager of ANPA, told me in New York that he hoped ASNE would go ahead and added: "When you've got a firm plan, come to us first. This is what the ANPA Foundation is for." It was to be one of the few bits of good news to come in the next months. For the politics of American journalism had come into full play.

Describing here what happened at the Chicago and the subsequent San Francisco Board meetings is difficult as a matter of personal ethics. Some things, however, are self-evident. Obviously, the Board is badly split or a decision would have come long ago. What can only be described as a muzzle was placed on Board members on the question of what has transpired. A few Board members protested, saying the membership should be told what had happened. I can testify that the worst

position to be in during a conflict is as presiding officer; one is stripped of the advantages of attack; he is judge, seeking to conduct a fair trial.

The only recent information the membership of ASNE has is a letter published in the *ASNE Bulletin*, sent to the new Committee on Ethics which was named in San Francisco to replace the Jones group. That letter was written by the new ASNE President, Newbold Noyes of the *Washington Star*, to Erwin Canham, the new Ethics chairman. There is no confidentiality that I know concerning the naming of the new committee.

Noyes, with whom I differ philosophically but with whom I enjoy a warm friendship, originally wanted me to serve in his term as Ethics chairman, but my plans to enter academic life made that impossible. We then agreed that an Ethics Committee made up of leading past presidents made sense. I suggested Canham as an ideal "alter ego" for me. Noyes agreed. My other choice was Jones. Noyes' two nominees were Vermont Royster of the *Wall Street Journal* and Michael J. Ogden of the *Providence Journal*. Canham and Jones were looked on as proponents of the idea of self-examination; Royster and Ogden as opposed. Later, Noyes and I agreed on Kenneth MacDonald of the *Des Moines Register & Tribune* as the fifth member. MacDonald described himself as attracted to the idea, but concerned about some of the "practical" aspects.

In retrospect, I confess to a major error as chairman at San Francisco. Certainly I should have insisted on a direct vote in the Board about the confidentiality of the proceedings. As it stands, I am palpably guilty of participating in the same hypocrisy I have always condemned in others: denouncing public groups such as university regents for conducting executive sessions, then drawing a cloak over one's own functioning as a trustee of a newspaper organization. That no member of the Society rose in open session to inquire about the grievance matter suggests a question that might be asked about American editors; that no reporter covering the meetings—and there were many—queried any officer is also something to think about.

The ASNE Board met again in early October in

Sorrento, Me. The Ethics Committee had been specially invited. Unfortunately Canham, as chairman, had been occupied as a member of the National Commission on Student Unrest and there had been no committee sessions. Sorrento, therefore, was the group's first canvass of the situation, and it seems fair to say that there is a good distance to go before any definitive statement will be made. There the matter stands.

Clearly, at some point a proposal is going to have to be put before American journalism. ASNE seems to me the most logical sponsor (though it could come through an organization such as the Association for Education in Journalism, which voted approval of the idea of an oversight agency). The question is, what will move ASNE? Under ASNE's constitution, the Board has full authority to conduct the Society's business. But some strongly opposed to the grievance proposal have threatened to take the issue to the convention floor, where they are convinced they can win easily. They may be right. Like all professional organizations, ASNE is the victim of its history. Under the membership requirements, every mem-

ber is the representative of his publisher.

Therefore, while many editors might look upon a grievance proposal favorably, it is conjecture as to how many would feel free to commit themselves in a public vote. Publishers have been known to bring personal pressure on other publishers, even if to no avail. Eugene Pulliam, for instance, was not averse to calling the publisher of one ASNE Board member to protest comments made by the editor. The thought will occur to many that one way of conducting a vote in which editors can express themselves freely is simply by a closed ballot not requiring signatures. ASNE members can smile wryly as they contemplate the long floor-wrangling before this could occur. Nonetheless, it has to be conceded this is a sane way of obtaining a democratic expression of true opinion.

In the final analysis, what is called for are enough editors willing to put their jobs on the line for what it is they believe in. I know it is asking a lot. But I have done it myself on occasion and so have some others, because we happen to think that's what being an editor ought to mean.

### Puffery, Washington style

—Washington Post



### For Whom the Bell Calls

A 15-seat twin engine Bell helicopter called at the Department of Transportation Building yesterday and gave a lift to a bunch of DOT employees — all designed to show the copier's paces as a means of getting around in cities.

By Charles Del Vecchio—The Washington Post



There is growing concern about the decline in frequency and quality of news conferences. Capital newsmen are partly at fault. A survey and some modest proposals.

## Salvaging the presidential press conference

JULES WITCOVER

■ In November, 1968, in the days immediately following Richard M. Nixon's election, both his press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, and his director of communications, Herbert G. Klein, were asked on several occasions about the new President's plans for holding news conferences. The reply, from both Ziegler and Klein, was that he would conduct "frequent but not regular" meetings with the press.

As a candidate in 1968, Mr. Nixon had studiously avoided the press and had held few news conferences. Yet there was some hope that once he entered the White House he would restore the press conference, which Lyndon B. Johnson first had demeaned by excess and eventually had eroded by neglect, to its former importance. After all, Mr. Nixon's Republican predecessor, President Eisenhower, had conducted regular weekly conferences, and there was no politician more experienced than Mr. Nixon in handling "Q and A," as he fraternally liked to call the press-conference exchange. A look at the record showed that

his disastrous 1962 "last press conference" in California was a marked exception to his customary controlled and confident performance in the extemporaneous discussion of issues with the nation's newsgatherers.

In his first year in office, however, President Nixon held only eight formal, televised conferences. Last Dec. 8, in the East Room of the White House, a reporter reminded him that he had conducted only three in the previous six months. Mr. Nixon replied: ". . . I try to have a press conference when I think there is a public interest—not just a press interest or my interest, but the public interest in having them. . . . If I considered that the press and the public needs more information than I am giving through press conferences, I will have more. I welcome the opportunity to have them. I am not afraid of them—just as the press is not afraid of me."

Since that time, the President has demonstrated even more conclusively that if he is not "afraid" of press conferences, he is inordinately wary of them. From Dec. 8 through September of this year—a period of nearly ten months—Mr. Nixon held only three formal, televised press sessions, plus two informal meetings with White House

---

Jules Witcover, of the Los Angeles Times Washington bureau, writes regularly for the Review. His book, *The Resurrection of Richard Nixon*, was published last summer.

correspondents in his office. The total of full-dress, TV conferences for his first twenty months in office—eleven, or an average of only one every seven weeks—was the lowest of any working President for a comparable period since Hoover.

This infrequency, and the content of those Presidential press conferences that have been held, have inspired increasing expressions of dissatisfaction in the Washington press corps [see survey, page 33]. Newsmen, of course, always have had complaints about the limits placed on them in discourse with the President. But not since the

---

*"One factor above all  
erodes the conference:  
its infrequency . . ."*

---

perambulating press conferences of Lyndon Johnson has the subject caused such consternation among those who depend on the meetings of President and press for substance and insight into the man who leads the nation. Mr. Nixon is isolated—or isolates himself—more than any other Chief Executive in recent years. Thus, the press conference can play a more significant role than ever; indeed, its importance is greatly magnified by the general inaccessibility of the President.

Among those voicing concern about the Presidential press conference in recent months have been Alan L. Otten, the veteran Washington bureau chief of the *Wall Street Journal*, in a column in his newspaper on Aug. 5, and Hedrick Smith, a State Department correspondent for the *New York Times*, in an article in the August issue of *Atlantic*. Otten and Smith agreed on a basic point: if there are to be better press conferences, the press will have to make them better. Otten wrote:

The President could help by having more frequent press conferences, thus improving chances that each one would deal more fully with currently important issues; by giving shorter answers and thus leaving time for more questions; by having more nontelevision conferences. Yet why should

the President change something working so much to his own advantage? Thus the responsibility returns to the reporters themselves—to remember they're there not to be seen by TV-watching family and friends but to uncover the President's policies and thinking on important subjects. This does not require nasty, have-you-stopped-beating-your-wife questions but, rather, intelligent, searching, follow-up questioning and a minimum of pompous speechmaking.

Smith wrote:

Whether or not President Nixon does increase his press contacts, the basic responsibility for restoring the vigor of the White House news conference rests with the correspondents themselves. The rigor of the questioning itself is vital. Without sliding into malevolent heckling or rasping cross-examination of a district attorney, newsmen can confront the President with more daring and tenacity than they have done in the past.

In any discussion of the presidential press conference, it must be acknowledged that some conflict between President and press, by the nature of the responsibility each bears, is inevitable. The President in his public remarks seeks not only to inform but also to build a case for his policies, to rally public opinion behind them. The press' role is narrower: to determine what those policies are, so that public opinion is shaped on fact, not propaganda. Part of the task thus is isolating fact from propaganda when a President seeks to use the press as a springboard to public opinion, as he does in a televised press conference.

This natural dichotomy has been deepened, however, by the defensiveness and protectiveness that are trademarks of the Nixon Presidency. In Mr. Nixon's cautiously insulated official world, press conferences are a major potential pitfall. Their infrequency suggests the continuing Nixon dislike for the spontaneous event; their careful staging by the White House staff demonstrates the same determination seen in the Nixon campaign of 1968 to inject as much control as possible. Ziegler maintains a seating arrangement, with reserved places for the White House "regular" reporters in the area immediately in front of the President. Mr. Nixon has come to know which of the reporters are likely to throw him a curve, which are the softest touches.

Not all the blame for ineffective press conferences, of course, can be assigned to the White House. A segment of the press is equally responsible by its excessive deference to the President, its lack of preparation, and, as Otten noted, the penchant of some to grandstand before the TV cameras. Most deplorable of all is the fact that until recently, at least, an unsubtle planting system involving a few reporters gave the President even greater advantage than he ordinarily had.

Don Bacon, White House reporter for the *Newhouse Newspapers*, wrote recently about another "regular" approaching Ziegler shortly before the July 30 news conference in Los Angeles and asking him: "Is there any fertile ground we should plow tonight?" Bacon wrote:

Ziegler did indeed know of a particular subject the President wished to discuss. Later at the press conference, the reporter was recognized, and he dutifully served up a slow, ninth-inning pitch that Nixon was able to bat out of the park. That is the way questions are "planted" in the Nixon White House. While the reporter initiated the deal, taking perhaps some of the onus off the White House, it represents nevertheless a cynical undermining of the traditional press conference, not to mention the press' so-called responsibility to the public.

Actually, in this instance, the White House regular had been instructed by his paper to ask a particular question, but he asked another when recognized. Later, in explanation to his superior, he said Ziegler had suggested that he ask the one he did pose. (When Mr. Nixon learned about the planting practice, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, he gave Ziegler a dressing down and forbade him to continue it.)

Planting of questions, of course, is not new. Presidents have employed various devices, all to the same end—to enable them to propagandize in the guise of legitimate and spontaneous cross-examination and thus gain more credibility for their answers. Reporters who lend themselves to such collusion are foolish and despicable, for they not only damage their own credibility among those who know what is happening, but also betray the trust placed in them by their employers—and by the public.

In addition to such tampering, there are many inhibiting elements for the reporter in the televised Nixon conference: the glaring spotlights, the battery of TV and still cameras, the imposing setting in the White House itself, the knowledge that millions are watching. But these elements existed in the Johnson Administration, and veteran correspondents adjusted to them. Newspaper reporters may not like it, but TV as a news medium is here to stay. For the press, a mix of regular weekly televised and untelevised sessions would be ideal. But from the public's viewpoint, the TV conference undoubtedly is preferable. The vital issue is the quality of the exercise, and one factor above all inevitably erodes the quality of the Nixon news conference—its infrequency.

For one thing, so much happens between conferences that it is not possible to question the President in a half hour about all major issues that have surfaced since the previous meeting. Also, the longer the interval between conferences the more general the questions are likely to become—and general questions in the hands of a pro like Mr. Nixon usually produce broad, unrevealing answers. One White House aide insists that the President would prefer sharper questions, because they elicit his best answers. But reporters who have not had a chance to question the President for several months, and who know his wary attitude toward them, may be less aggressive out of concern that they may drive him into isolation for another several months.

The long intervals in themselves inhibit the questioning. Reporters with questions that are not, in one correspondent's word, "cosmic," may feel constrained to withhold them to give others a chance. As a result, some of the best questions framed in reporters' minds never are posed to the President. Even when conferences have been held frequently, the press often has failed to pose the obvious inquiry. Past press secretaries James C. Hagerty and Pierre Salinger have said that they constantly were amazed at the questions that never were asked; Ziegler has reason to share that amazement today. (In what may be the best-remembered question ever asked at a White House news conference, Charles H. Mohr,

### How the conference evolved

□ Louis Brownlow, in his autobiography *A Passion for Politics*, told how the Presidential press conference began, and the story's point about the respective roles of President and press remains valid today. He described how Theodore Roosevelt, at the end of a long afternoon in the White House, would call in five or six reporters and hear their questions while a valet gave him a pre-dinner shave. "As the razor would descend toward his face," Brownlow wrote, "someone would ask a question. The President would wave both arms, jump, speak excitedly, and then drop again into the chair and grin at the barber, who would begin all over again." When the last bit of lather was removed from the Presidential face, reporters and barber would be dismissed with a wave of Roosevelt's arm.

William Howard Taft gave the event more formal if less colorful trappings by conducting regular weekly sessions in the Cabinet room. But he played favorites, giving the best stories to men like Gus Karger, correspondent for the Cincinnati *Times-Star*, the Taft paper.

Wilson initiated the first mass-attendance conferences, held twice a week. He had high aspirations for them, as a kind of academic seminar with himself cast as professor, imparting gems of wisdom while tapping the consensus of his reporter-students. But the press saw its role differently. It reported to the country not only about Wilson and his policies but also about his family. When wedding rumors concerning his three daughters began to appear in print, along with observations he thought he had made in confidence to newsmen, Wilson nearly scrapped the press conference. Instead he barred direct quotation and finally, after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, did cut the sessions off to end leaks to various embassies.

Warren G. Harding, the Ohio publisher, resumed twice-weekly conferences, but his openness produced diplomatic boners that required official denials and eventually persuaded him to accept only written questions, submitted fifteen minutes before the start of the conference. Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover followed this practice. Coolidge added the wrinkle of answering only those questions he chose to answer and discarding the rest, often in full view of the reporters who had written them. Hoover required the questions a full twenty-four hours in advance.

Franklin Roosevelt abandoned the stiff written-question format for a throwback to the Teddy Roosevelt give-and-take. He called reporters into his office for cozy exchanges, but still they could not quote him directly without explicit permission. Harry S. Truman followed the same procedure until 1950, when he moved the conferences into the Executive Office Building across the street from the White House. There, Eisenhower held the first conferences taped for radio and filmed for television.

In 1961, John F. Kennedy inaugurated the live television conference, which briefly disintegrated into the perambulating press conference on the White House grounds under Lyndon B. Johnson, and eventually found a home in the White House's East Room, where President Nixon continues to hold his full-scale meetings with the press.

then of *Time*, in 1960 wanted President Eisenhower to list policy decisions in which Vice President Nixon, then the Republican Presidential candidate, had participated. Eisenhower replied: "If you give me a week I might think of one. I don't remember." At the next conference, nobody asked if the President had thought of one.)

Aside from the quality of the questions, there is an even more important reason, for lamenting the infrequency of the Nixon press conference. During the Eisenhower years and earlier, when the conferences were held weekly or nearly that often, they came to serve a constructive function far beyond providing insight into the President's thinking, policies, and moods. In a real sense they worked as a catalyst for government action. When the President was asked for a status report on a particular program one week, with the bureaucracy knowing he would face the press again a week later, the chances were good that the bureaucracy would stir—and sometimes even bring forth results in that week's time. That prod is gone now.

Finally, when two months or more elapse without a press conference, its old role as a means for the President's gauging public concerns is all but lost. Woodrow Wilson, a Nixon favorite who erroneously has been credited with originating the Presidential press conference, said at his first: "Please do not tell the country what Washington is thinking, for it does not make any difference. Tell Washington what the country is thinking." Mr. Nixon can use the kind of press intelligence to which Wilson referred. In spite of his expansive claims that he is "taking the government to the people," his peripatetics have provided more the appearance than the substance of public exposure and contact. The press, through questions reflecting the nation's worries week by week, can tell him much more about its mood than a shouted remark by a North Dakota housewife in a hand-shaking crush along an airport fence.

Many of Washington's ablest correspondents agree that restoration of weekly sessions would curb increasing criticism of the news conference as an effective vehicle for informing the public. Many of these veterans insist that concern about



the quality of questions now asked, lack of follow-up, the inhibiting nature of the format, and other oft-voiced complaints would fade if only the President would restore the press conference of the 1940s (Franklin D. Roosevelt's no-TV, no-radio, no-quotation huddles around his desk), the 1950s (Dwight D. Eisenhower's filmed sessions, with direct attribution on a delayed basis), or just hold the current "live" TV version every week. Mr. Nixon has held informal meetings with reporters in his office, but they, too, have been most infrequent—four in twenty months.

Merely citing the infrequency of press conferences as a major cause of their current low state is, however, no panacea. The President must agree to hold more. Although many in the press have come to think of the Presidential conference as theirs, the history of the institution demonstrates otherwise [see box, left]. The conference has its roots in tradition, not in the Constitution or any lesser law, and if it "belongs" to anyone, it is to the President. He alone decides how often it is held. He can use it, abuse it, or dispense with it altogether. Although Mr. Nixon has not taken the latter extreme, his very limited use of the conference has reduced it as never before to a controlled showcase for his considerable talents as a semantic shadow-boxer. A comparison between the way he prepares for the conference and how the Washington press prepares suggests why he likes it just as it is.

When the President announces that he will meet the press, an intensive procedure—derived in part from the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson Administrations—is triggered throughout the federal bureaucracy. Every major agency pulls together facts on the most important issues before it. They are transmitted to the White House to alert the President to all potential questions and to provide him with answers. Patrick J. Buchanan, the former *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* editorial writer who prepares a daily digest of press reports, sifts from the voluminous material submitted by the bureaucracy domestic items he believes will be most helpful. The staff of Dr. Henry Kissinger, the President's national security adviser, filters out data forwarded by all departments and agencies dealing with foreign policy. Buchanan checks it

all, sometimes asks for additional information, condenses it, and gives it to the President, who also may ask for more specifics concerning a particular issue. Then, Mr. Nixon secludes himself and studies the material, according to one White House source, "as someone who prepares for an oral examination."

If Mr. Nixon announces on a Monday morning that he will hold a press conference on Saturday, the system produces condensed raw material for him on domestic issues by Wednesday noon, on foreign policy by Thursday noon, an updated report in the domestic area by Friday noon, and an updated report on foreign policy before the conference starts. Last-minute developments are flashed to him to make sure he is more thoroughly briefed than any reporter in the room. Just before Mr. Nixon's televised press conference in Los Angeles, for example, pickets formed outside the Century Plaza Hotel. Buchanan spotted them from a window, ran out, talked to a number of them, raced back in, and personally informed the President about their identity and complaint. As it turned out, nobody asked Mr. Nixon about the pickets, but he was ready.

Contrast that preparation with what the bulk of the press corps in Washington—where ten of the first eleven presidential conferences were held—does to get ready. With relatively few exceptions, when the President announces he will hold a conference reporters check their calendars—and little else—and go about their normal business. Some of the larger Washington bureaus painstakingly prepare sharp and critical questions, but most play it by ear. If 200 newsmen walk into the East Room for a press conference, probably fewer than half have any intention of asking a question, and half of those remaining have thought of one on the way to the White House. Even those bureaus and individual reporters who take the time to determine what really needs to be asked—and how—can be effectively neutralized by the President and by the very format of the conference. In the customary half-hour session, seldom can more than eighteen or twenty questions be asked, and the President can filibuster.

What can be done to overcome these weaknesses and restore the White House press conference to

its former usefulness—not as just another tool in a President's propaganda arsenal, but as a two-way exchange that benefits both President and public? Obviously, much better preparation on the part of the press in formulating tough questions, and greater diligence in pursuing major issues, individually and collectively, are the first steps. (In spite of Vice President Agnew's image of the press as a New York-Washington axis of sinister collusion, the national press corps is jealously individualistic; the truth is that very little collaboration occurs in preparing questions for a

---

## *“Could not reporters confront the President with their concern in a conference . . . ?”*

---

meeting with the President—probably not as much as in the little game that has been played between Ziegler and his few resident helpmates.)

The press conference procedure itself is part of the problem. Reporters who come prepared with a question often are so intent on asking it—and phrasing it so that it will be understood by the huge TV audience as well as by the President—that they give no thought to pursuing a colleague's line of interrogation that has not been satisfied. (There is a traceable difference in the pursuit of a single subject area in informal conferences and in the full-dress TV conference. For example, on July 20, when Mr. Nixon met reporters in the Oval Office, twenty-three questions were asked. Six of seven in a row sought clarification of the President's views on South Vietnamese President Thieu's position toward a possible coalition government in Vietnam. Ten days later, in the TV conference in Los Angeles, of eighteen questions, only two in a row were related.)

The time may have come when concerted action is required. If the President can invoke the vast federal bureaucracy to help him dominate the

conference, why should not the members of the Washington press corps, to save this valuable American institution, get their heads together? Smith, in his article in *Atlantic*, proposed four ideas to be considered by the White House Correspondents Association. He suggested: 1) “limiting questions at certain crucial conferences to a single broad topic”; 2) “asking reporters to group all questions on the main topic of the day during the first half of the news conference . . . leaving the remainder for any other kind of question”; 3) “establishing a firm tradition that each questioner can follow up his own inquiry once”; and 4) “finding a new way to determine who gets the floor to replace the present jumping match.” Concerning this last, Smith suggested that reporters might “draw random-numbered slips as they enter the conference and then ask questions in numerical order,” or that they write out questions and submit them to a pool of four or five newsmen who “could then engage in coordinated questioning of the President on one or two major topics in the first half of the conference, throwing open the final half to everyone else.”

The idea of limiting questions to a single topic has been tried at the President's instruction in the past, and has helped, but the decision always has been his, and under any formal arrangement through the White House Correspondents Association probably would continue to be his. Splitting the thirty-minute session probably would allow insufficient time either for questioning on a single topic or on several. Giving each questioner the right of one follow-up question could be effective, but also could be abused by grandstanders; it is not so important who pursues a question, but rather, how purposefully it is done. As for ending the jumping match, the asking of questions according to slips drawn would do nothing at all to counter the larger problem of hopscotch questioning from one subject to another. Both this approach and the idea of written questions submitted to a pool of interrogators have an even more serious drawback—each would take the spontaneity out of the press conference. Its value is in the interplay of question and answer *as they unfold*; one answer may suggest a vital question no one has thought of in advance. Indeed, what makes a

# **GIVE COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW FOR HOLIDAY GIFTS**

at the special gift rates

**\$5**

ONE-YEAR GIFT SUBSCRIPTION

- ☐ bill me after Christmas  
☐ I am enclosing payment



To:

name \_\_\_\_\_

street \_\_\_\_\_

city \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip \_\_\_\_\_

gift card to read \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



To:

name \_\_\_\_\_

street \_\_\_\_\_

city \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip \_\_\_\_\_

gift card to read \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Your gift will be announced  
on a handsome

## **HOLIDAY CARD**

**PLEASE DON'T FORGET  
YOUR OWN NAME & ADDRESS**

your name \_\_\_\_\_

street \_\_\_\_\_

city \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip \_\_\_\_\_



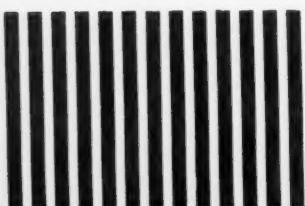
**GIVE  
COLUMBIA  
JOURNALISM  
REVIEW FOR  
HOLIDAY GIFTS**

**BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**  
No Postage Stamp Necessary if Mailed in the United States

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY

COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW  
700 JOURNALISM • COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10027

FIRST CLASS  
PERMIT No. 22712  
NEW YORK, N. Y.





## Suggestions for change: a survey

To assess the state of the Presidential press conference, *CJR* sent a questionnaire to sixteen prominent Washington bureau chiefs and the senior White House correspondents for AP and UPI. From the responses it is clear that experienced newsmen are becoming increasingly concerned about the press conference as a journalistic institution. Also, that while some of the concern is rooted in policies of the present Administration, these are only part of the problem.

The infrequency and irregularity of press conferences were most often cited as an important shortcoming—by thirteen of the eighteen respondents. Second, mentioned by twelve respondents, was the lack of follow-up in questioning of the President. Third, mentioned by ten newsmen, was the influence of TV.

To Philip Potter of the Baltimore *Sun* the relative infrequency of conferences is central. "I honestly believe," he says, "that if we had press conferences once a week other questions about it would be unnecessary." To Jack W. Germond of the Gannett Newspapers the crux of the problem is follow-up: "There is no way to follow up on questions and either force a reply or make it clear a reply is not being given."

One of the most striking findings is the extent to which newsmen believe the press corps shares responsibility for the conference's decline. Martin F. Nolan of the Boston *Globe*, for instance, says, "The White House press corps asks polite and easy questions." Thomas B. Ross of the Chicago *Sun-Times* bemoans "bad questioning; lack of focus." Others spoke in a similar vein.

Moreover, based on the survey, it appears that the press might be more willing than generally realized to give up the present "leap-and-shout" method of gaining recognition, in favor of experimentation that might allow greater follow-up. The survey, with the list of respondents:

**1. Recognizing the realities of the situation, do you believe that Presidential press conferences now serve the public interest as well as the press and public have a right to expect?**

Yes	2
No	16

**2. Do you believe that under the present Administration the press conference has**

improved in service to the public?	0
declined in service to the public?	9
not appreciably changed?	7
No opinion	2

**3. What are the most important shortcomings? (List any number)**

Infrequency	13
Lack of follow-up in questioning	12
Changed atmosphere due to TV	10
Press not aggressive enough	2
Conferences are too brief	2

Conferences are too large	1
Reluctance to experiment	1

**4. What are the most important changes you believe should be instituted?**

Greater frequency	10
Regularly scheduled	8
Less or no TV	6
Tougher, more professional questioning	1
One-subject conferences occasionally	1
Press action to direct questioning	1

**5. Would you object to:**

- Having reporters submit questions, identified by number only, to a rotating jury of senior correspondents, who would pick those to be asked? 14
- Limiting a press conference to a single subject, to be decided by a consensus of correspondents? 9
- Limiting the first half of a press conference to a single subject, after which random questioning would be accepted? 4
- Following a "subject area" sequence in which announcing "same subject" would give a reporter priority over one announcing "new subject," until no more "same subject" queries were heard? 6
- Determining who shall ask questions by drawing numbered slips upon entering the press conference, the numerical order to begin after questions from, say, senior correspondents of AP and UPI? 7

### Respondents:

Don Bacon, Newhouse Newspapers  
 Charles W. Bailey, Minneapolis Tribune  
 Robert S. Boyd, Knight Newspapers  
 Frank Cormier, AP  
 Richard Dudman, St. Louis Post-Dispatch  
 Max Frankel, New York Times  
 Jack W. Germond, Gannett Newspapers  
 David Kraslow, Los Angeles Times  
 Peter Lisagor, Chicago Daily News  
 William May, Newark News  
 Martin F. Nolan, Boston Globe  
 Lawrence M. O'Rourke, Philadelphia Bulletin  
 Alan L. Otten, Wall Street Journal  
 Philip Potter, Baltimore Sun  
 Eugene Risher, UPI  
 Thomas B. Ross, Chicago Sun-Times  
 Jerald E. terHorst, Detroit News  
 Lucian C. Warren, Buffalo Evening News

good press conference is the free exchange between an alert press and an alert President. Without that element, why not turn the whole thing over to professional actors who have rehearsed their lines?

The California press has worked out one solution. In gubernatorial press conferences in Sacramento, full opportunity is given to pursue one line of questioning before another is introduced. When a question is answered, a reporter who wants to ask another on the issue says, "same subject," and is recognized. Behrens, as the dean of the California statehouse reporters, supervises the flow and may ask whether there are more questions on the pending subject before a new one is introduced. If Mr. Nixon would agree to this approach, or perhaps to some modification by which he himself would be the monitor, the content of the Presidential conference probably would be improved immediately. Such agreement, however, would constitute a direct reversal of the Administration preference for tighter control of the mechanics of the conference.

There is strong reason, too, to doubt that the White House Correspondents Association is the best vehicle for trying to bring about change. Although all reporters who have a White House press card belong to it (though some in Washington are not members), the organization is in the hands of the White House regulars and is largely ceremonial; its major function is the planning of the annual White House Correspondents Dinner for the President. Those reporters closest to the White House on a daily basis may find it hardest to confront the President in any "negotiation."

The best answer may be an ad hoc effort by those reporters—White House regulars and irregulars—who are sufficiently concerned about the matter to act. Why should not a number of them meet before a press conference, agree on what the most critical questions are, and each seek the President's recognition to ask them? Such a procedure also would go a long way toward restoring depth exploration of vital issues; reporters would be prepared to follow up a colleague's question to elicit further comment and, if necessary, to pin down the President when he wanders off or intentionally sidesteps the question. To put this

tactic into effect, no wide agreement would have to be sought, either with the President or the press corps as an entity. Smith acknowledges that "the hitch" in his suggestions is that they "cut into the Washington reporter's prized independence, the foundation of the present system." Action by an informal group of newsmen volunteering to function in concert could overcome that.

In the last analysis, greater frequency of the conference remains the best hope, and to get it, there is one other avenue open to the press. Mr. Nixon, for all his past statements to the contrary, always has been particularly responsive to public opinion. Could not those members of the Washington press corps who are disturbed about the erosion of the Presidential press conference confront him with their concern in the one forum in which they have an equal opportunity to reach the public—in the televised press conference itself? Could they not, in a spirit of constructive inquiry, point out the benefit past Presidents have noted in frequent, regular exchange with the press, and urge Mr. Nixon to restore the weekly press conference? Could they not come prepared to raise all aspects of the matter with him, and thus engage him before the nation in a thorough examination of what the press conference is today, and ought to be?

The idea is not, of course, without its pitfalls. Many reporters would want to continue to go their own way. Vice President Agnew likely would brand the effort as ganging up on the President, as proof of his collusion theory. The public might respond negatively, protesting that the frequency of the press conference is a professional concern only, and questions about it ought not dominate the conference when so many other pressing questions need answering. The President himself might shut off the exchange, even at the price of appearing to be evasive. Yet if the press sincerely believes that a valuable public institution is dying, the risk would be worth taking. It should be possible for professional newsmen to raise the issue with the President at length, with all the courtesy and deference that the man and his office deserve, without being accused of arrogance, disloyalty, insurrection, or worse. If not, then there is all the more reason it should be done.

MARION K. SANDERS

## 'Tripping' on the drug scene

Some coverage of narcotics problems has been admirable, but moralizing, misinformation, and sensationalizing predominate. Why not an embargo on "non-news"?

■ During most of last spring I was continuously at work on an article for *Harper's* magazine about drug abuse, a subject which had been one of my editorial concerns for several years. I had set myself a relatively—or so it seemed—modest task: to sort out fact from fantasy in the welter of conflicting reports about the nature of the problem and the best way to deal with it. The assignment proved difficult and arduous far beyond my expectations. In the end, I think I came reasonably close to my goal. But along the way I was repeatedly mired in a swamp of claims and counter-claims and seemingly irreconcilable differences among experts in an emotionally overcharged climate which made rational dialogue between the generations virtually impossible.

All this was vividly mirrored in the press and on TV. And several things were clear. Drug abuse among the young was reaching a crisis stage, as documented by the body count of deaths from heroin overdoses and ghastly reports of the consequences of "speed" and other hallucinogens. At the same time government officials, whose efforts to cope with the situation were manifestly unsuccessful, had set up a defensive smokescreen. Operators of various therapeutic programs were noisily

touting their wares and knifing their competitors. So were the promoters of assorted schemes of "drug education," none of which seemed to be accomplishing much. Small wonder that most people were bewildered. I am afraid the majority still are. And I believe that—with some notable exceptions—the communications media have compounded public confusion.

I have now accumulated a small mountain of clippings about narcotics from magazines; from papers in New York, where I live; and from the contributions of friends across the country. Since spot news is ephemeral, most of this harvest belongs in the wastebasket. But leafing through it—for perhaps the hundredth time—I have compiled my private honor roll of genuinely sophisticated and distinguished reporting. (I apologize for any omissions; I do not have the resources for a comprehensive sampling of the nation's press.) To cite a few highlights:

—The *Atlantic's* lead article in the August, 1966 issue—"White-Collar Pill Party," by Bruce Jackson—was, to the best of my knowledge, the first full-account of the pervasive "drug ambiance" among adults far removed from both youth culture and the black ghettos.

—*Time*, in its issue of Sept. 26, 1969 (at a time when hysteria about the drug problem was

---

Marion K. Sanders is a contributing editor of *Harper's*.

rising to fever pitch), put together the comprehensive, rigorously factual roundup "Pop Drugs: the High as a Way of Life," which, instead of echoing the prevailing tone of panic, soberly observed that "pop drugs hardly portend anything as drastic as a new and debauched American spirit as some alarmists believe. . . . The mounting research on drugs permits some new perspectives on their use and abuse. . . ."

—Early in 1969 Richard Severo of the New York Times spent months digging into the operations of the New York State Narcotics Control Commission. His report, published April 21, 1969, deflated the state's claim of a 44.2 per cent success rate. "The computer has not been programmed to provide this information," he was told when he asked how long the state institution's graduates had maintained their amazing record of abstinence from drugs. He also shattered the officially fostered illusion that the facilities were primarily rehabilitation centers rather than prisons. Severo subsequently did a brilliant series on the realities of the addiction problem in New York [Sept. 23-26, 1969], in Sweden [April 10, 1970], and in Britain [March 30, 1970]. The last report was particularly valuable in dampening local enthusiasm for the "English System" under which addicts are given a free heroin supply.

One of the small gems in my collection is a terse account by Mark Tanner, which appeared in the Montgomery County, Md., *Sentinel*, of a talk at the Prince Georges Adult Education Program by Dr. Frank C. Caprio, a Washington psychiatrist, previously on the staff of the federal narcotics facility at Lexington, Ky. In an effort to dispel prevailing myths about drugs, Dr. Caprio told his mostly over-forty audience that barbiturates are much more addictive than heroin and that, despite abundant research, there is no scientific evidence to indicate that marijuana is more harmful to the human body than alcohol, or is more addictive than tobacco. He went on to say that the fact that most heroin users started with marijuana is irrelevant since all heroin users have also used cola drinks, aspirin, and alcohol, and one could just as logically claim that one of these started the addict down the "road to shame."

Such sensible and sober remarks are not generally regarded as "newsworthy." What does make perennial headlines is the ferocious and quite irrational anti-marijuana campaign initially launched in the 1930s by Harry J. Anslinger, longtime chief of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, and pursued with undiminished fervor (and ever diminishing effectiveness) by his successors.

Consider the complaint of John Kaplan, author of the impressive, scholarly book *Marijuana—the New Prohibition*. Kaplan, a Stanford Law School professor of criminal law who has served as a legislative consultant, was astonished last Aug. 26 to pick up a copy of the Redwood City, Calif. *Tribune* and read a story headlined A HORRIFYING PICTURE ON MARIJUANA DANGERS. Written by NEA Washington correspondent Ray Cromley and distributed to some 500 papers, the report is, says Kaplan, a "perfect example" of the kind of specious reporting which "has done more to foster dangerous drug use among young people than any group of pushers yet apprehended." The story and Prof. Kaplan's criticisms of it are reprinted on pages 41 and 42.

Mr. Cromley—like every other journalist—has a perfect right, of course, to the opinion that marijuana is more dangerous than alcohol. But the scientific evidence, which is considerable, does not support him. (See, for instance, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Aug. 6, 1970.) Hence, I think one may fairly say that he breaches the boundaries of responsible journalism when he cites scientists out of context to buttress his view that marijuana invariably leads to heroin addiction and that, among other horrors, it can cause birth defects, grave psychiatric emergencies, brain damage, and cardiac failure.

Nonetheless, many "drug education" pamphlets and exhibits continue to equate the ubiquitous reefer with the heroin addict's "works" and an assortment of potentially lethal pills and capsules. What are the consequences? "You tell a kid drugs will kill him," one young ex-addict told me. "Then the kid starts smoking grass. He sees it don't kill him. So what's he going to do but say 'Shit, this didn't kill me, so I'm going to try dope next'."

Said another: "When I was on drugs and my



friends and I went visiting, we'd head for the bathroom to look for pills we could swipe. Most of the time we didn't know what they were. So we'd look at our drug education pamphlets and say, 'Oh, that's Nembutal, that's Dexedrine,' and so forth. You learn pretty quickly."

The harsh realities were expertly summed up by Terry Beresford in the *Washington Post* on Aug. 25:

Our present drug-education programs, which is a euphemism for propaganda that adults hope will dissuade youth from drug use, are doomed to failure, as soon as children are old enough to see that the facts given them by adults are partly or wholly untrue.

William Raspberry, in his April 24 column in the *Post*, sounded a similar cautionary note.

But nowhere in the news media have I observed a serious attempt to evaluate the results of a specific drug education program, a task well within the capacity of modern social research and, it would seem, a most logical function for an enterprising journalist. Conversely, the few promising efforts at prevention undertaken by young people themselves have been given scant coverage. One of these is STASH (Student Association for the Study of Hallucinogens), which is dedicated to developing "among all 'consumers' of drug information a critical attitude toward, and an ability to come to rational conclusions about, pronouncements on drugs (including our own)." The project, which is the brainchild of Beloit College students Edmund Zerkin and James Gamage, devotes itself to distributing materials of impeccable scientific accuracy. It was mentioned in an article, "The Drug Scene in East Egg," in the *New York Times Magazine* on May 17. It seems unlikely, however, that many Sunday readers got as far as Page 98, where the few paragraphs about STASH were buried. Apparently they also escaped the notice of the *Times'* own news staff. For surely this was an item well worth following up in depth—even if it involved sending a reporter to darkest Wisconsin—by a paper that has been volubly campaigning for "effective action" against the drug menace but has been painfully short of concrete suggestions as to what form that action should take.

Front-page display, on the other hand, was accorded President Nixon's pronouncement on March 11 that "drug abuse among school-age youth is increasing at an alarming rate"—a discovery most of the nation had made at least a year earlier. Indeed, it would appear that any public official or office-seeker is guaranteed respectful press attention whenever he issues a statement—however banal or preposterous—on the narcotics problem. Thus during the fall campaign readers of the *Detroit Free Press* were treated to fulsome accounts of the largely empty utterances of Michigan Governor William J. Milliken, who has a seven-part program for the instant solution of the drug problem, and of his Democratic opponent, Sander Levin, who offers a mere five-part proposal.

In New York, Governor Nelson Rockefeller similarly traded inanities with the contender, former Justice Arthur J. Goldberg. Forced to concede the failure of his own \$300-million program, the

---

*"There is a real danger the subject is being overreported..."*

---

Governor turned his eyes to the poppyfields of Turkey. "The one way to stop heroin addiction," he announced, "is to stop heroin at the source." The Nixon Administration, he went on to say after a flying visit to Washington, knew precisely how to do this. Mr. Goldberg chose an earthier approach. Six months after his election, he promised, treatment would be available to every addict desiring it. "I will walk the streets myself to see whether open sales have stopped, and they will be stopped." Neither statement, though duly publicized, provoked a panic among the city's pushers and dealers.

The Harris Poll and others had, by this time, demonstrated that anxiety about drugs was widespread, and it was perhaps predictable that candidates would cynically exploit a tragic situation. But one might, I think, question the uncritical

amiability with which the press—including one with such a knowledgeable staff as the *New York Times*—gave the politicians free rein. For instance, on Aug. 4 Governor Rockefeller announced that he “would confer with legal and medical experts to determine whether to declare drug addiction an epidemic.” The reporter for the *Times*, which had been proclaiming—and documenting—the existence of an epidemic for months, was Barbara Campbell. Apparently in search of a “new angle,” she sought out Dr. Tibor Fodor, an epidemiologist expert in the control of smallpox, tuberculosis, and diphtheria, who assured her that once an epidemic was declared “the highest priority would be given to stopping the spread of the disease, finding the cause of the epidemic, and preventing future outbreaks. . . .” The question of just what form these measures would take in the case of narcotics did not come up; nor, after the *Times*’ discovery of the Fodor plan, was the Governor asked to explain the nature of the evidence he would need before applying the magic label of epidemic to the drug situation.

The melancholy fact is that the drug scene is a highly marketable commodity, both in the news and entertainment media. When the President and Attorney General John N. Mitchell met in August with thirty-five TV executives to bespeak their cooperation, the response was exuberant. Drug warnings and drug “alerts” have since proliferated on the home screen. Writing from Hollywood on Sept. 1, AP columnist Cynthia Lowry reported:

Series producers speak forcefully of “relevance” and brag about the use of meaningful themes. Narcotics and drug abuse by the young are such popular ingredients of scripts that they threaten to become dramatic clichés. Pushers are the new villains and the terrible consequences of addiction are underlined. . . .

Presumably the message of these scripts is “don’t do it.” Whether this will be the result is problematic. I recently discussed the matter with Dr. Joyce Lowinson, a psychiatrist specializing in the treatment of narcotics who has been particularly concerned with the coded drug messages in pop music. “Unfortunately,” she said, “in the young, curiosity is stimulated before fear. Many of our

young patients tell us that their interest in drugs was aroused by the media. Scare stories scare parents.”

And it is indeed the frightened adult population that has generated the drive to “do something” about the youthful drug scene. For contrary to much wishful thinking, most young drug users are not clamoring to be rescued. As a young man who kicked heroin in his mid-twenties told me: “One thing you have to remember about drugs is that they are very functional for a kid in a rotten world which is no fun, which is ugly and dirty. Drugs take the kid out of reality and to hell with the world and all its problems.”

This is why the great majority of young addicts now in therapeutic communities are not volunteers. The doors may be unlocked but their presence is required, usually by court order—a fact the programs’ operators do not like to dwell on. Nor do they care to discuss results in concrete terms for the very good reason that they do not keep reliable followup statistics, nor has any other agency done so. The inquiring reporter or even a casual visitor is taken on a conducted tour by a courteous, cheerful young resident—usually one nearing the end of a two-year course of treatment and now preparing for “reentry” to the square world. The guide is candid and graphic about his own drug experience and eloquent in praise of his particular “house”—whether Daytop, Phoenix, Odyssey, or any of the others which use the encounter therapy pioneered by Synanon. (Odyssey has added a larger component of professional psychiatry.) One concludes that these are all worthy efforts which help some addicts, that the differences in their methods are not significant, and that there is no way of judging their accomplishments in the absence of outside evaluation.

Unable to cite objective criteria, the drug therapists in New York who are fiercely competing for public funds have waged an unremitting publicity war in which the press has lavishly cooperated. The clear winner, in lineage if not as yet in the allocation of tax dollars, is Dr. Judianne Denson-Gerber, operator of Odyssey House. Rightly applauded for sounding the alarm about the ominous spread of heroin use among the young, she has been portrayed on TV and by the

newsmagazines as virtually a candidate for sainthood, with the revered *New York Times* leading the pack. The move for her canonization seems somewhat premature.

On Feb. 26, Dr. Judy, as she is known to her charges, appeared at a televised legislative hearing with a frail twelve-year-old addict, Ralph de Jesus, seated on her lap. Millions of TV viewers and newspaper and magazine readers were shown the touching scene. In all probability, very few of them saw the minor item, a week or so later, which reported that Ralphie had stayed in Odyssey House only a few days, that he was now back in his native drug-infested habitat in the Bronx, and that there was some doubt about the veracity of the story he had told under Dr. Judy's prompting. Some months later I happened to meet an official of the school the boy attends. He told me that the heroin problem escalated markedly after Ralphie's rise to fame. The message to the young was clear: the way to get on TV is to be an addict.

Dr. Judy's publicity coup prompted her tireless rivals, the city-operated Phoenix Houses, to follow suit. On March 5 one of their fifteen-year-old residents, Maria Navarro, told her story to an assemblage of reporters and was duly photographed with the Mayor and a brace of municipal eminences registering pained concern. "Phoenix House is teaching me how to be fifteen years old," Maria said. "It's beautiful to be fifteen." The applause for Maria was deafening, according to the *New York Post* of March 6.

Much as they feud with each other, people of the therapeutic community are united on one point—their scorn for methadone maintenance as a treatment for heroin addiction. The method, pioneered by Drs. Vincent Dole and Marie Nyswander at Rockefeller University, has since been expanded and is now being used at a number of hospitals in the city. Its results have been statistically monitored by Columbia's School of Public Health Administration. As of September, 1969, the success rate was 80 per cent in 2,205 cases. Eighteen per cent had dropped out. Of the rest, after three years, only 2 per cent had been arrested, 96 per cent were in school or gainfully employed (as compared to only 29 per cent on admission), and none had become readdicted to heroin.

Figures like these have not impressed the encounter-therapy zealots, nor, until very recently, the *New York Times*. In January, in response to the waiting lists—running to thousands—for admission to methadone maintenance, Governor Rockefeller allocated an extra \$15 million to the programs supported by the state. Instead of applauding this sensible step, the *Times* on Jan. 19, in an editorial titled *NO ONE ANSWER TO DRUGS* (a claim never made by any methadone advocate), used the occasion to berate the Governor for all the things he had not done, particularly for young addicts. (The methadone programs in New York admit only addicts over eighteen—of whom there are believed to be over 100,000—a not negligible group.) Six months later, on June 8, the *Times* somewhat grudgingly conceded that the Columbia report on the Dole-Nyswander program showed more than 2,000 patients "doing remarkably well" and called for similar evaluations of other therapies.

Methadone is a complex and controversial subject. But it is quite possible to write about it calmly and knowledgeably, as was done, for instance, by Ed Edelson of World Book Science Service in a report appearing, among other places, on Oct. 17, 1969, in the San Bernardino, Calif., *Sun*. Anyone who read it would have a clear understanding of its advantages and limitations.

But what was the *New York Times'* audience to make, not only of its wavering editorial stance, but of its curious recent news coverage of methadone? My own impression is that its reporters and editors do not always read their own paper. On June 11 more than half of the first page of the second section and a large picture spread were devoted to Richard Severo's chilling account of the "rumor, intrigue, and criticism" besetting an experimental methadone program in Brooklyn which had deliberately departed from the Dole-Nyswander guidelines. On the same page was a story by Edward Ranzal about the Mayor's plans to expand methadone programs, written and edited without any cross-reference to Severo's story. The next day, June 12, on page 1 was Harold M. Schmeck Jr.'s report on the federal government's plans to tighten up regulations on the use of methadone. He wrote:

The main point of the regulations appears to be to insure that methadone programs are carried out under strict medical supervision. Programs in New York that adhere to these principles would presumably not be greatly affected. . . .

Just what this meant in relation to the Brooklyn project could not be discerned, for the question was not raised. Instead Schmeck quoted without comment the absurd assertion of Dr. Charles C. Edwards, Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, that methadone had not been proved a "satisfactory" treatment—despite the fact that the *Times*, four days earlier, had given its editorial blessing to methadone. An additional note of confusion was provided on June 18 by Anthony Lewis. In one of those "let's look at the bright side of things" columns, he singled out the chaotic Brooklyn program described by Severo (but without mention of Severo's report) as an "encouraging example" of positive action.

If I have been particularly critical of the *Times* it is not because the performance of any other paper has been consistently superior. Quite the contrary; the aforementioned stories by Richard Severo would do any paper proud. But the *Times* is not only our journal of record; it is the bellwether of the whole communications flock.

I do not belittle the role of the news media generally in sounding the alarm about the drug problem and forcing public officials and school administrators to face a situation they prefer to pretend does not exist. However, careless ad hoc reporting of this complex subject is not useful. And I think it is clearly time to declare an embargo on non-news about drugs, particularly the irresponsible handouts of political candidates and the contrived stunts of publicity-seekers.

It would also, I believe, be helpful if more thought were given to the interpretation of real events. It is, I suppose, news when a young Kennedy or Shriver is "busted" for possession of pot. Such an occurrence could well be used to call attention to the harshness and ineffectiveness of our marijuana laws rather than the public humiliation of eminent citizens. This could be done without "editorializing." The enterprising reporter need simply include, for background, interviews with any of the thousands of middle-class

parents of adolescents who have experienced or live in terror of a like calamity.

No doubt stories about the drug scene sell newspapers and magazines and boost TV ratings. But was Woodstock really, as *Time* observed on April 29, 1969, "one of the significant political and sociological events of the decade"? Was it worth the eight pages of mainly glamorous photographs which *Life* devoted to it in the same week, setting the pattern for the generous coverage accorded subsequent rock-drug orgies by the media generally? GROOVY OR GRUESOME? was the head under which the *Detroit Free Press* on Aug. 15 published a batch of reader comments on last summer's Goose Lake fiesta in Michigan. The reporter for the *Free Press*, Bobby Mather, made her own position clear in a witty Sunday piece on Sept. 6:

I have had enough of wild hair and beads and Indian headbands, and bare feet and bedraggled girls and drug peddlers and freaky outfits and bare bosoms and the constant obscenities and bad smells and mud and zonked-out kids sprawled on the ground.

It seems unlikely that the reporter's slant will have much impact on the reaction of readers, which seems, for the present, split straight down the generation gap. Whether it is glamorized or excoriated, there is, I think, a real danger that the drug scene is being overreported. A sad analogy is the plague of alcoholism, which was also hot news in the early days of *Alcoholics Anonymous* and the subject of such stirring films as *Lost Weekend* and *Days of Wine and Roses*. But who writes about alcoholism any more, even though—by the best estimates—it claims three times as many victims as narcotics? And who wants to read about it?

The reading and TV public could, in the foreseeable future, become quite as bored with the nodding addicts of Harlem, the East Village, and Haight-Ashbury as with the besotted derelicts on the Bowery. We might even see the drunken comic, once a staple of the vaudeville stage, replaced by a new figure of fun—the crazy "speed" freak. For we have a tendency in this country when we are fed up with a problem we can't cope with to treat it as a joke.



## A 'horror story' on marijuana coverage

□ It has long been known that a major impetus toward youthful experimentation with dangerous drugs has been the fact that authoritative pronouncements on the issue have lost their credibility. It is hardly surprising that the misleading information and exaggerated statements by respectable authority figures have left many of our young people vulnerable to drug proselytizers (and regrettably there are some among adults as well as youths). Many observers have pointed out that slanted "drug education" can leave some young people positively eager to show their contempt for its dishonesty—even at some risk to themselves. An NEA story by Ray Cromley, distributed to some 500 newspapers in August, is a perfect example.

By RAY CROMLEY  
NEA Washington Correspondent  
WASHINGTON (NEA) —  
One of the cruelest campaigns  
ever conducted in this country  
has been directed at convinc-  
ing Americans marijuana is  
no serious danger—"no worse  
than alcohol."

The fact that a larger number of respected authorities have held just this does not seem in any way to deter the author.

The idea that marijuana  
smoking tends to lead users on  
to even worse drugs has been  
denied as fantastic and with-  
out evidence.

The words of prominent  
medical men have been  
twisted out of context and  
their denials ignored.

In spite of the fact that it is very difficult to find a psychiatrist familiar with both the dangers of alcohol and marijuana who will assert that on balance marijuana is intrinsically more dangerous, the story asserts that "the words of prominent medical men have been twisted out of context and their denials ignored."

As a matter of truth, a series of not-yet-published research studies sponsored by the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health give the most horrifying picture of what marijuana may do to chronic smokers.

When these NIMH reports are made public, probably within the next few weeks, they most certainly will startle thinking people.

The thrust of the entire story is the promise that recently completed but "not yet published" research will document all of the horror reports of marijuana use that it subsequently sets out. In fact, anyone who had taken the trouble to read the studies would know that, first, they have long been in the public domain, and second, that they do not support the view that marijuana is more dangerous than alcohol.

Listed below are some glimpses of what that research shows:

—There are indications, in some cases, that the marijuana-caused alterations in behavior "would be conducive to acts of violence." There is apparently a strong suggestion in some research that continued heavy use of marijuana may cause serious damage to the unborn children of users.

—Dr. Constandinos Miras, visiting professor at UCLA working under NIMH support, used radioactive marijuana to track the drug through the human body on subjects who smoked at least two cigarettes daily for two years or more. His tests revealed "abnormal brain wave readings patterned to behavioral changes." In some cases, with longtime users, Miras noted chronic lethargy and loss of inhibitions for two years after their last usage, indicating, he felt, significant and lasting organic brain change.

The first of the named reports is that of Constandinos Miras, who is, according to the story, "visiting professor at UCLA." Dr. Miras is no such thing. He is a professor at the University of Athens and presently the Greek government's head of its equivalent of our Food and Drug Ad-

ministration. Dr. Miras' connection with UCLA is that, as a guest speaker in a pharmacology seminar and at a press conference at UCLA on a U.S. tour in September, 1967, he announced that "I can recognize a chronic marijuana user from the way he walks, talks, and acts," and that chronic marijuana users show the symptoms of brain damage. Although this is reported with accuracy, the story neglects to mention that, first, Dr. Miras later recanted most of the more dramatic information he had imparted, when he said that he was describing only a very particular kind of heavy and continuous marijuana user (in a culture where the drug is often mixed with much more dangerous substances such as datura); and second, that some chronic alcohol users show just as many general signs of deterioration as do Dr. Miras' subjects—and in a higher percentage of the using population.

—Dr. William McGlothlin, a research psychologist, and Dr. Jolvon West, of the Department of Psychiatry at Oklahoma University, working under a NIMH grant, found that present day marijuana use plays "a role in initiation to other potent drugs, particularly LSD."

—Regular use of marijuana, they also report, contributes to characteristic personality changes — "apathy, loss of effectiveness and diminished capacity or willingness to carry out complex long-term plans, endure frustration, concentrate for long periods, follow routines or successfully master new material. Verbal facility is often impaired, both in speaking and writing." Some individuals show "a strong tendency toward regressive, childlike magical thinking."

The study by McGlothlin and West is made to serve the purposes of the story only by quoting out of context. Although the reporter correctly quotes the authors as saying that marijuana use "plays a role in initiation to other potent drugs, particularly LSD," and in some users contributes to personality changes such as "apathy, loss of effectiveness, and diminished capacity," nowhere does he mention that

McGlothlin and West also point out several reasons to believe that marijuana is less dangerous than alcohol. Such as that "a shift from alcohol to marijuana use tended to be correlated with a change toward less delinquent behavior," and that, in fact, the whole tone of their article was that "society is going to have to take a more tolerant attitude toward marijuana." Nor is it mentioned that both Drs. McGlothlin and West have publicly stated that in their opinion marijuana is, in the population as a whole, no more dangerous than alcohol. Finally, rather than being the bombshell the correspondent implies, the McGlothlin and West article has been around for at least two years—it was published in the September, 1968, edition of the *American Journal of Psychiatry*.

—Drs. Harris Isbell, D. J. Jasinski and C. W. Gorodetsky of NIMH, with associates in Germany, report that sufficiently high dosages of a substance extracted from the marijuana plant "can cause psychotic reactions in almost any individual."

Nowhere is it mentioned that the dose used by Isbell and his co-workers approximates at least eight times the dose used in ordinary social circumstances. As such, it is about as relevant to any danger of marijuana as are reports from what would happen to an individual who drank sixteen bourbons at a sitting. Moreover, this paper, rather than "not yet published," has been published and republished over the past three years.

Some NIMH studies center on marijuana from the standpoint of chromosomal breakage patterns. The objective is to determine the potential danger to future children of chronic smokers. The results of these studies (if there are any results thus far) are not known to this reporter. But the work of Dr. William F. Geber, associate professor of pharmacology at Georgia University, certainly suggests the possibility of serious harm to the unborn.

Dr. Geber has injected pregnant rabbits and hamsters with large doses of resin from marijuana plants. The resultant fetuses contained mal-formed limbs, spines, livers and brains. They often suffered from edema, or excessive fluid, on the brain and spinal region.

First of all, the injection of marijuana resin by a user is such a bizarre act that the scientific literature reported only one instance of it. One would hardly expect that such a water-insoluble substance could be injected with impunity without major harm to the organism. Nor does the reporter feel any obligation to mention the many widely known studies which indicate that there is no more reason to suspect marijuana of causing birth defects than to suspect aspirin, antibiotics, or a host of other materials in common use.

There are also a considerable number of other independent studies (non-NIMH-supported) which bear out the extreme dangers inherent in smoking marijuana.

Dr. Herbert A. Raskin, psychiatrist at Wayne State University, reports cases "in which marijuana high comes on again spontaneously, weeks after the person has had a high . . . We've also had some young people with acute psychoses brought on by marijuana."

Drs. Martin H. J. Keeler, Clifford Reiffer and Myron Liptzin, of the University of North Carolina School of Medicine's Department of Psychiatry, report that experience with marijuana users at the university's medical center suggests that this spontaneous recurrence of marijuana's effects may be relatively common and that it may often be accompanied by a degree of anxiety sufficient to constitute a psychiatric emergency.

The reporter implies that these studies are quite new and that their results come as something of a surprise. As to the first two, neither implication is correct. These studies report that the symptoms of marijuana use may recur after the event, and that marijuana use may precipitate a psychiatric emergency. In both these cases, the story carries not the slightest hint that both reactions are extremely rare (and

the first far more so than the second). Nor does it indicate that quite similar reactions—recurrence and psychiatric emergency—can be caused by any stressful experience—such as sex relations. The story makes no mention of a far broader study showing that there were many times as many psychiatric emergencies occasioned by the use of patent sedatives, which are freely available without prescription.

Dr. James C. Munch, in his paper, "The Toxicity of Cannabis Sativa," states that (some) "humans smoking marijuana cigarettes . . . have developed . . . progressive brain damage and death from cardiac failure."

The only problem about this is that anyone who has read Dr. Munch's entire paper would know that it contains absolutely no documentation of any relationship between marijuana use and the illnesses named. Indeed, there is no hint that the cardiac failure and the brain deterioration occur any more often in marijuana smokers than they do others.

Each time the press invents more "secret" evidence it is behaving more like the boy who cried "wolf." Not only does it make its next listing of newly discovered evidence less credible, but it weakens the effect of any honest effort to communicate the actual dangers of marijuana to young people. This is not, of course, to say that marijuana has no dangers. Of course it does. But it is only when we are honest about the magnitude of these dangers—as the NEA story most certainly has not been—that one can hope to dissuade young people from use of marijuana—or, more important, really dangerous drugs.

JOHN KAPLAN

John Kaplan is professor of law at Stanford and author of the book *Marijuana—The New Prohibition*. His comments are adapted from a letter to NEA on Sept. 9, requesting transmission of his letter to NEA clients, or a client list for his use. As of Oct. 1 no reply had been received.

## What really happened in Biafra?

Why did themes such as mass starvation and genocide alternately surface and fade?  
A study of media susceptibility to public relations manipulation.

KAREN ROTHMYER

■ One early-autumn afternoon in 1968 two small girls stood at a subway entrance on New York's Upper West Side. To each passerby they presented an open notebook with room for pasting coins inside. "Would you like to help the children of Biafra?" one inquired softly. The pages filled with coins. All over the country the scene was being repeated. In one of the most unusual coalitions in recent history, Right and Left, old and young, church fellowships and hippies joined in a vast outpouring of emotion and money for the relief of Biafra's children.

It had been more than a year since the leaders of the Eastern Region of Nigeria, ancestral home of the Ibo tribe, had seceded and formed the nation of Biafra—in May, 1967. The Nigerian Red Cross long since had issued an appeal for aid to refugees of both sides in the civil war. In November, 1967, Professor Audrey Chapman of Barnard College, describing starvation she personally had witnessed in Biafra, had appealed for relief funds and managed to collect \$6,000. "I was like a voice in the wilderness," she recalled later. During this period Biafra had seized Nigeria's Midwest Region, dropped bombs on the capital of Lagos, then been driven into a landlocked enclave. Then suddenly the Nigerian war became 1968's hottest news item.

---

Karen Rothmyer is a reporter for Associated Press in New York City.

On June 30, 1968—almost a year to the day after federal troops had marched against the new nation of Biafra—a page 1 story appeared in the *New York Times*. In it Leslie Kirkley of the Oxford University Committee on Famine Relief was reported as saying:

Unless we pull out all the stops in Britain and other countries we will have a terrifying disaster in Biafra before the end of August. By then two million may have died.

The cause of the impending "disaster," the story explained, was kwashiorkor, a form of malnutrition. Dr. Herman Middlekoop, a Church World Service representative who had been in Biafra since March (but had been silent in the world's press), said he believed that 6 million people could be expected to die in six months. This was the first mention in the press—ever—of starvation in Biafra. The first picture of a starving child appeared three days later.

Within two weeks *Time* and *Newsweek* ran their first stories and pictures of starvation. *Life's* first major story on the war, on July 12—the day of *Time's* release—included a Biafran charge of "systematic genocide" against the federal government. President Johnson publicly asked both protagonists to allow relief deliveries through military lines. On July 14, the *New York Times* carried the first official Biafran statement on the subject: Dr. Nwenyue Otue—a short, quiet, unassum-

ing physician who early in 1968 had been designated Biafra's Special Representative to the United States—predicted that 1.5 million Biafrans would die of starvation before the end of August.

If kwashiorkor—and imminent starvation—of this magnitude existed in Biafra, why had there been no word of it in the press prior to July? Why were such disparate estimates of starvation victims—1.5 to 6 million—published with so little questioning or qualification? Why, even since the end of the war last January, has the question of mass starvation on this scale disappeared from consistent followup in the press for weeks or months?

Conor Cruise O'Brien, writing in the *New York Review of Books* of Dec. 21, 1967, suggests that one answer may be in the timing of the war:

Vietnam was in every mind, and an African conflict waged between Africans for indigenous reasons seemed a distant, buzzing irrelevance.

Another might be the course of the war. Biafra had gone from a strong position to a weak one. And Cyrian Ekwensi, a tall, brooding novelist who managed Biafra's foreign press relations, says that a deliberate effort was made to tell the starvation story after the fall of Port Harcourt—a military setback that cut Biafra off from the sea and from its last major airport. Then as the Biafran government's position became hopeless, the strategic priority of relief flights (which some critics charged were used partially as cover for armaments deliveries) waned.

William Artis, Jr., on pages 48 and 49, advances another possible factor: American news media's ignorance of and cultural bias about Africa.

Whatever the reason—and it may never be known—the news media's handling of the story was such that several aspects deserve closer examination. One is the largely unpublicized role of professional public relations practitioners.

From the start, Biafra had known that international recognition was unlikely; most Western countries wished to see a united Nigeria, as did African nations with divisive elements within their boundaries. Lacking access to the State Department and the White House, the Biafrans had to seek other means to communicate their story. On Feb. 14, 1967—three and a half months before

their secession—they engaged, for \$5,500 a month, the New York public relations firm of Ruder and Finn.

The Ibo Eastern Region had been involved in open friction with the rest of Nigeria since January, 1966, when Ibos had joined in an attempted coup whose victims had included prominent Northern and Western leaders. Northerners responded by killing an undetermined number of Ibos who lived and worked in that region. According to Ronald Rubinow, who handled the Biafran account, Ruder and Finn believed that its job would be glossing over such unpleasanties and "selling the Eastern Region" to businessmen. Within weeks, however, it was selling a new country.

Aggrey K. Oji, then the Republic of Biafra's Special Representative in the United States, at first set up operations in the Ruder and Finn

---

## " 'Biafra? What's that? A new disease?' . . . "

---

headquarters. But after a few weeks, says Rubinow, the company advised him to set up his own office. R & F, Rubinow says, "tried to encourage the press and Congressmen to see Biafra for themselves" (though no transportation was paid for), produced press releases, and attempted to arrange meetings between Biafran and American leaders. The job wasn't easy, he adds. He recalls one newsman who, upon hearing about the new country, said: "Biafra? What's that? A new disease?"

The Biafrans, says Rubinow, wanted R & F to emphasize two points: 1) that the 1966 killings in the North had been a form of genocide against the Ibos; and 2) that Biafra never had shared a similar culture or history with the rest of Nigeria. Biafra continued to employ Ruder and Finn until December, 1967, at fees totaling nearly \$104,000. Lack of money was given as Biafra's reason for canceling the contract.



In January, 1968, Biafra hired Markpress, Ltd., a Geneva, Switzerland, public relations firm run by William H. Bernhardt, an American who speaks with a British accent. Bernhardt's job—for a fee never revealed but rumored to be substantial—was to disseminate to the world press all stories written by foreign correspondents while in Biafra, as well as the bulk of Biafran government statements. Markpress also was listed as the Biafran News Agency, and its Telex machine was hooked up to one in Biafra.

Markpress, Bernhardt told an American journalist who visited him in 1969, supplied information to 400 organizations, including 100 newspapers. He also told a Philadelphia *Inquirer* reporter that Biafra had granted Markpress the right to decide if stories transmitted on the Telex were in Biafra's "best interests" or needed "adjustment." In any event, some journalists declined to file copy on the Biafran Telex, preferring instead to send copy out by courier. In addition to transmitting news and photos, Bernhardt arranged trips to Biafra for many European journalists—some of them free. Although Bernhardt had little direct contact with the American press, he did visit the editors of several publications and sent a letter to New York Senator Charles Goodell commending him for what Goodell's aides say Bernhardt called "a magnificent job" during a Biafra visit early in 1969.

Three months after hiring Markpress, Biafra acquired yet another PR firm, Robert S. Goldstein Enterprises of California. This, recalls Biafran representative Otue, was on the recommendation of a Biafran who "knew Goldstein." Though Goldstein's office was in Los Angeles, says Dr. Otue, the expectation was that he would open a New York office for Biafra matters. The contract called for a \$10,000 payment to Goldstein before signing in March, then \$400,000 on Dec. 1, 1968.

For a time Goldstein's voice was a familiar one to many people in the press and government. According to Dr. Otue, Goldstein wrote the State Department in July, complaining of its inactivity concerning hunger in Biafra. By August, Dr. Otue recalls, Goldstein had reversed himself and complained that Biafra was using the hunger issue for political ends; pleaded that he was under great

pressure from the State Department to cease his activities; and accepted \$35,000 from the Nigerian government to call a press conference at which he denounced Biafra. The Biafrans say Goldstein failed to collect any of the \$400,000 he had been promised by them, and he subsequently dropped from reporters' view.

Before the war ended, two other public relations firms arrived on the scene. Biafra, about the same time it parted company with Goldstein, began receiving the services of Creative Public Relations of New York City, a one-man organization consisting of Michael Luckman. Through Luckman, Biafrans were booked as guests on radio-TV talk shows and on speaking tours. A private donor

---

## *" 'Genocide' was never mentioned when the first killings occurred . . . "*

---

paid his fees, according to Luckman. Apparently he was inactive after mid-1969.

Nigeria, meanwhile, on July 30, 1968, joined the PR maneuvering by signing a one-year agreement with Burson-Marsteller Associates for \$27,500. In February, 1969, an agreement retroactive to Nov. 1 escalated the annual payment to \$35,000, with an additional \$2,500 if funds became available. According to Washington account executive Barry Allen, the firm's duties included trying to bring Nigerian officials together with the press for briefings, and making contacts between the Nigerians and members of government. It "takes a selling job" to get the press interested, he said. "Even the so-called informed press doesn't know much."

Carl Levin, the firm's Washington general manager, says he felt his most important function was "not in publicity but in counseling." On many occasions, he says, the Nigerian Ambassador came to him—or Levin sought him out—to discuss how moves contemplated by the Government were

likely to be received by Americans. Levin says he made the suggestion that Nigeria sponsor an international observer team to help counter Biafran accusations of wartime genocide. Nigerian embassy officials deny this, insisting Levin's work was "not related in any imaginable way to politics."

Later in 1969 Burson-Marsteller canceled its contract, citing what it felt was an inability to be effective. The Nigerian government, says Levin, had failed to respond to its suggestions for expanding the program into areas such as citizen groups, and didn't want to spend enough money to do what Levin regarded as an adequate job.

Nigeria's only other known contact with a public relations firm came in 1967, when Dumbarton Associates of New York City was approached several times about a full-scale public relations campaign. Dumbarton previously had provided services for the Nigerian airline. But plans never were approved by the military government in Lagos, and Dumbarton did no more than set up a trip for a Nigerian official in July, 1967. Anthony Enaharo, who became Federal Commissioner of Information shortly after the Biafran secession, says that the military regarded public relations as a low priority and "didn't make any effort at all" in that direction. "They saw it as a small conflict that would soon be over," he says. The July, 1968, eruption of publicity proved how unsophisticated this evaluation was—at least as to PR.

And what of the starvation issue after its sudden mid-1968 appearance?

Two weeks after the New York *Times*' story the Washington *Post* published a front-page report on starvation. A few days later correspondent Anthony Astrachan questioned the reliability of the starvation figures and voiced skepticism over the issue itself. His article on July 21 was one of the few such analyses ever to appear. The first full-page ad for Biafran relief appeared in the New York *Times* on July 19. On Aug. 13, the New York *Times* carried the first detailed report of an earlier speech in which the Pope had called Biafra an area "awakened to civilization, in full civil, cultural, and religious development."

In October, 1968, relief groups testifying before a special Senate subcommittee hearing advocated U. S. Government intervention to relieve starva-

tion. Indeed, the Washington *Post* later reported, Edward Kinney of Catholic Relief Services had said that bishops in every diocese had been asked to contact local Congressmen to urge government sale of airplanes to relief groups. The Roman Catholic Church, of course, had a direct interest in Biafra arising out of its large numbers of members there plus missionaries who staffed its churches, schools, and hospitals. According to John Ledkicher, foreign editor of the Catholic News Services, most missionaries traveling to Europe and the United States to talk about Biafra were pro-Biafran, and it was they who supplied the majority of stories run by the Catholic News

---

### *"The use of PR firms to influence action by governments is increasing . . ."*

---

wire services, which supplies 90 per cent of American Catholic newspapers with Catholic news. During the Presidential campaign, Richard Nixon called on President Johnson not to stand on "diplomatic niceties" in dealing with the war, and Senator Eugene McCarthy urged a UN resolution providing for an air and sea lift of food.

It is difficult to calculate how much influence public relations—both formally and indirectly—had on the press. Several examples indicate that it may have been considerable.

Take the avowed Biafran PR goal of gaining acceptance for the notion that genocide was being perpetrated. The word "genocide" never was used when the first killings in the North occurred. Only later was the charge made, and extended to war atrocities. Consider, too, the kind of "numbers game" that evolved in connection with Biafran fatalities. After the third and worst of a series of outbreaks in the North in September-October, 1966, Lloyd Garrison estimated in the New York *Times* that 2,000 Easterners had been killed; the

October 14 *Times* estimated "at least 1,000"; the October 17 *Newsweek*, "hundreds." Federal estimates later were fixed at 5,600. But the Biafrans, in a March 10, 1967, New York *Times* advertisement, publicized a total of 30,000. Most journalists accepted the Biafran figure of 30,000 and used it without explaining its source. In fact, by March, 1968, Garrison in a *Times* story estimated 50,000. And John Barnes wrote in *Newsweek* Sept. 9:

Whatever promises are made by the federal government, every male Ibo knows he has little chance of surviving if he falls into the hands of Nigerian troops. And what will happen to the Ibos when there is no more room to run is too awful to think about.

Then there were reports such as one by correspondent Peter Webb in the July 29 *Newsweek*. Things were so bad in the Eastern Region, he wrote, that people were eating rats. A photo accompanied the story. However, Americans who have lived in that area—as well as persons from the region—report that rats are a normal part of the diet. It is clear this story was told to the press, which simply failed to place it in context.

As for Biafra's other main public relations goal—to prove its cultural and religious separation from Nigeria—no journalist to my knowledge pointed out that from the time of Nigerian independence to the first coup the Easterners had managed to maintain a ruling political coalition with the Northerners, whom they now accused of genocide. But according to Lloyd Garrison they were so different from the Nigerians that they didn't even look like them. Garrison, in one of three articles for the *Times Magazine*, wrote that faces on Ibo masks showed Mid-Eastern, not Negroid, features.

It must be admitted that the job of newsmen in Nigeria was not easy, in part because of obstacles beyond their control. Though any journalist or interested person could make an application to visit Biafra, for instance, final clearance had to come from foreign press relations manager Ekwensi. And, Ekwensi said, there were certain people he would not let into the country because they were political "enemies" who would not change their minds upon visiting there. Chief Enaharo of Nigeria said his country's initial policy of allow-

ing in all newsmen was changed after some persons with pro-Biafran sympathies used such visits to qualify as "objective" experts. "In cases where they have written from the other side first," he explained, "there is no point in letting them in." In addition, correspondents faced the problems of wartime transportation, foreign language barriers, and cultural differences.

Still, it is difficult to justify the extent to which the news media responded to pressures and activities of persons and organizations with self-interests closely tied to one side. Especially when one realizes that the Nigerian situation was not unique. Roger Hilsman, in *To Move a Nation*, has described how Belgian PR man Michael Struelens, in the Congo crisis during the Kennedy Administration, almost single-handedly engineered support of Moise Tshombe's secessionist state of Katanga, resulting in the State Department's pulling back from support of UN efforts to end the secession. In fact, the use of public relations firms to influence governmental or public action on international questions is becoming more and more common. Justice Department officials, for instance, tell how Bermuda not long ago hired a PR firm to lobby for a change in the law governing the value of goods that returning tourists can bring into the country duty-free; and they note that various Latin American countries use PR firms to help lobby for favorable sugar quotas. Particularly among small countries, they say, hiring of an agency which claims to "know its way around" often is regarded as a necessity.

Some such activities probably are inevitable. But the danger comes when—as apparently occurred in the Nigerian war—the Government or the news media rely too heavily on such firms rather than their own investigation. Errors, exaggerations, and propaganda then come to be accepted as conventional wisdom, all but incapable of correction. The farther away geographically the story occurs, the more likely it is that special-interest groups will be successful in influencing its telling. If the tragic ordeal of warring factions in Nigeria has taught us nothing else, it should have taught us that, and alerted editors and reporters to just how vulnerable they are to manipulation if they allow themselves to be.

## The tribal fixation

□ As soon as the Nigerian government announced its victory over Biafra, the American public was barraged with "news" about the strong likelihood that the "Nigerian army may run amok" and the "African tradition that rape and looting in conquered territory are an integral part of victory itself." If the public read the stories very carefully it undoubtedly discovered that much of the "news" was nothing more than speculation and an incredible number of ideas seemingly borrowed from watching old movies and early TV "jungle" shows.

In part, the poor coverage stemmed from the scarcity of attention given to the continuing war by U.S. and European correspondents and from actions taken by the Nigerian government to control foreign correspondents. However, much of what appeared cannot be excused for these reasons. Most coverage of Africa in the U. S. press consists of stories depicting a fantasy world that exists in old movies and comic books and the mind of the observer. A careful reading of stories appearing in the New York press, particularly in the New York Times and New York Post last Jan. 12-21, illustrates this in relation to the Nigerian victory.

The reporting frequently reflected a view of the Nigerian loyalists as being almost congenitally brutal, helpless, and savage children. In the New York Post of Jan. 13, for instance, one paragraph from combined cable dispatches reads:

Pope Paul and some European governments have made similar pleas for mercy amid speculation in African capitals that the Nigerian army may run amok. The Biafrans themselves are said to be terrified—because of African tradition that rape and looting on conquered territory are an integral part of victory itself.

The writer refers to "speculation in African capitals." There is a serious question about who did the speculating and in which of the dozens of African capitals. The Biafrans in the story were said to be "terrified (Africans, like their old Hollywood counterparts, apparently can't just be fearful, they must be "terrified") because of African tradition that rape and looting in conquered territory are an integral part of victory itself." Apparently it is not an old tradition and an integral part of victory in non-African countries.

On Jan. 21 the Post carried an AP story from Owerri, one of the defeated areas, detailing the horrors of rape and looting by the victorious Nigerian army:

The first reporters allowed inside fallen Biafra saw famished refugees fighting for food, looting by Nigerian soldiers, and heard several first-hand accounts of women being raped by victorious Nigerian troops. [Emphasis added.]

The writer points out what reporters saw — presumably he included himself — and heard. Significantly,

none of the alleged rapes were *not* seen. To hear "first-hand accounts of women being raped" doesn't add any more credibility than hearing second- or third-hand accounts of such a thing. Were the "first-hand accounts" from medical doctors? Somehow the notion seems to persist as it did in reporting of the Congo war a few years ago that black Africans are excessively motivated toward rape. This kind of view usually complements the one portraying innocent Europeans in defeated African war zones in flight from the savages. The Jan. 12 Post carried a London Express wire story containing the following paragraphs:

A Spanish doctor and his team of international helpers were reported held by Nigerian troops who took the International Red Cross hospital in Owerri, the last remaining Biafran town and capital according to reports here. It was *believed* that Dr. Louis Salvador, who works as a house surgeon in the hospital at Troyes in eastern France, has been mistreated by his captors. [Emphasis added.]

The reader is never told for sure that the doctor has been captured — yet the writer proceeds to tell the reader that it was "believed" that the doctor "has been mistreated by his captors." Who believed it and on what evidence?

A Jan. 14 New York Times story said:

Among the fleeing foreigners was a British civil engineer, Alfred W. Johnson, who had lived for twenty years in the territory that made up Biafra. He had been forced to move from one place to another since May 1968.

The story said he and his "Biafran wife" took a plane to London. Why had he not become a Nigerian citizen?

The notion that African conflicts are "tribal" was paramount in most of the stories. The Jan. 13 New York Times said:

The collapse of Biafra by no means marks the final solution of the Ibo problem. That problem, whose intensity was vividly demonstrated by the massacres in Northern Nigeria in 1960, will only be solved when the Ibo tribe believes that it is safe.

The same journalists do not use the "tribalism" concept to explain problems of Northern Ireland, nor is it used to describe ethnic and "irridenta problems" in Albania and Czechoslovakia. When they do use the concept, it lends itself to great oversimplification.

For example, in the Jan. 13 Times story it was asked:

What use then will be made of the extraordinary talent of the Ibos, who, whatever else they did during the struggle for Biafra, created and administered the first wholly African-run state on the continent, without significant help from Europeans?



Is the reader to assume that other stories dealing with the plight of Europeans trapped in Biafra — heading hospitals, running arms, and coordinating relief efforts — were untrue or that the actions described did not amount to “significant help from Europeans?”

The “tribalism” concept, while usually denoting primitiveness, can also be used to anoint certain groups. Indeed, a Jan. 14 *Times* dispatch practically accorded the Ibo people the status of honorary Israelis. The story, which compared the Ibo people with the Israelis, started with a chauvinistic 1949 quotation from Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, an early independence leader:

It would appear that the God of Africa has specially created the Ibo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the ages . . . The Ibos — the dominant tribe in Biafra — like the Biblical Israelites, are educated, individualistic, clannish, and enterprising. They are known for their unbending will, which some call arrogance, but which others equate with the modern-day Israelis, whom the Ibos admire greatly. There are, indeed, some striking parallels between the Ibos and the Israelis. In little more than two generations, by their own efforts without British paternalism, the Ibos have produced skilled statesmen, physicians, writers, and scholars and millionaire businessmen.

The Ibos are Christian, having taken to Christianity with ardor at the turn of the century, when the first missionaries penetrated the swamp and jungle of the Niger Delta. The missionaries discovered that they were welcome to the eastern delta if they promised to build schools as well as churches. No one knows where the tribe originated. Some anthropologists suspect that they may have migrated from the Nile Valley centuries ago. They point to the fact that although many Ibos are jet black, others are light in color and some have reddish-tinted skin. The faces on their carvings are Eastern, not Negroid. . . .

By 1945, the writer explained, there were more Ibos studying in the U. S. than all other Nigerians combined, and young Ibo writers had produced numerous pamphlets on “how to get ahead.” However, this drive “was a two-sided sword; Ibos came to be widely regarded as being too ‘clannish’ and too ‘combative’”; and in the Northern Region of Nigeria “anti-Ibo feeling flared into violence” in 1953, long before the civil war.

Dr. Elliott P. Skinner, Columbia University anthropologist specializing in African societies, and former Ambassador to the West African country of Upper Volta, has studied Western press coverage of black African nations for several years and believes that it is directly related to how blacks are viewed in the U. S. “The American press has served to perpetuate certain myths about Africa,” he says. “This portrayal has meaning for American society in that the presence of blacks in America serves to underscore the supportive myths

about Africa.” He cites the numerous newspaper stories of *reported* cannibalism during the Congo war. “Of interest is that no anthropologist has found visible evidence of cannibalism.” He adds that the press’ frequent use of the terms “tribalism,” “tribal jealousies,” and “tribal hatred” to explain complicated African problems such as ethnic rivalries and power struggles is a way of labeling Africans as “primitive people ruled by primeval” forces.

Dr. Skinner is dubious about speculation that the Ibos “may have migrated from the Nile valley centuries ago” because “although many Ibos are jet black, others are light in color and some have reddish-tinted skin. The man who said that was wrong,” he declares. “The Ibos don’t have mixes from migrating from the east. The Yorubas are the ones who have mixed by migration, not the Ibos. I think the Ibos’ having light skin color might be a function of what happened in the Niger Delta in the sixteenth century. There were whites there. And if there are any light-skinned Ibos, look to what happened there at that point in time.”

Contrary to the notion that the Ibos were attacked in the Northern Region in 1953 and in the early 1960s because they were too “clannish and too combative,” he says that they were attacked “for the same reason that Jews are attacked” in Harlem. “The Ibos represented a middleman class in the colonial system and afterwards, and as such their role was no different from the one the Asian played in East Africa or the Dahomeans in the Ivory Coast and Niger.” He adds: “The anthropological concept of tribe, in terms of social organization, is that you go from a family to a lineage to a clan to a tribe to a nation. Tribe would be juxtaposed to a state. The difficulty is that people don’t like to think in terms of African societies as having political organization. Our Western culture has consistently and pervasively worked against this.”

Other persons have noted the tenacity of stereotypes of Africans in the face of reality. An article in the September, 1967, *African Studies Bulletin* maintains that Max Gluckman, anthropologist at the University of London, “tells of a thesis that he had to turn down because after field work the candidate described a kingdom as if it were merely a collection of lineages.” Historian Jan Vansina, in his book, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, indicated that many historians cling to stereotypes of African society in writing about “tribal history” when they fail to distinguish “between the politically sovereign community — a political unit — and the cultural community — a cultural unit.”

To paraphrase a 1958 lament expressed by Dr. Skinner in the *Journal of Negro History*: That the stories cited could have been written about Africa last year and this year is tragic, because “the history of Africa and its institutions is better known than before.”

—WILLIAM ARTIS, JR.

William Artis, Jr., a reporter for the *New York Post*, was an Interracial Reporting Fellow at Columbia in 1969-70.

## Notes on the art

### What the "Times" could learn from London letters pages

■ The *Times* of London, as seen by this London-based American observer, is inferior to the New York *Times* as a source of solid news, but the letters section of the Thunderer of Printing House Square outdoes its Forty-fourth Street namesake in every way.

Does it matter? To some it matters a lot. To a reader of the *Times* of London, for example, it is like asking whether democracy matters. The *Times* letters section is, to him, one of democracy's more important and exciting manifestations. It is a daily democratic happening. The longer one reads the letters to the London paper the more one realizes what one misses in New York.

"There is no American equivalent to the national controversies in the *Times* letters columns," writes Anthony Sampson in his book *Anatomy of Britain*. There certainly isn't.

Until the New York *Times* launched an Op Ed page on Sept. 21, the space it devoted to letters was half that of the London paper. Now letter writers get roughly the same number of column inches on both sides of the Atlantic.

But vast differences remain. The *Times* of London prints—and encourages—protests, praise, amplifications, corrections, running controversies, humor, and casual observations. The last three of these are taboo on the New York *Times*, and corrections are infrequent. [See "Department of Correction," by Edward W. Barrett, *CJR*, Spring,

1968.] As one *Times* editor said on the eve of the expanded section: "John Oakes [editor of the editorial page] thinks the letters are dandy as they are, and that twice as many letters will be twice as dandy. Many of us think that they are dull now, and that twice as many letters will be twice as dull."

Those on the *Times* who would like to see it change its letters policy look with envy to London, where lively discourse and dispute from the outside are carefully-nurtured world-famous phenomena. Many people, attracted by the wit, by the big names and giant controversies, take only a glance at the front page, then plunge eagerly into the three to five columns of letters on the leader page. Few readers of the New York *Times* begin with the letters; many don't stop there at all.

Not all readers of the *Times* of London plunge in eagerly, of course. There are the unhappy victims—the member of parliament who is shredded by another MP, or the professor who, having slipped a cog in constructing a theory, is being noisily gnawed to death in public by his colleagues. But victims, assailants, and noncombatants alike agree that it matters. "The letters section is not only the best read part of the *Times*," says Felix Kessler, *Wall Street Journal* London correspondent who reported on the *Times* last May 13, "but it is also the best part. It has enormous influence. This is due both to the expansive and imaginative outlook of its editors and to the more receptive government officials who read it."

Writing to the *Times* (as the *Times* itself immodestly wrote in its autobiography, *A Newspaper History—1785-1935*) "is an institution almost as old as the journal itself." It added:

From a British privilege it has become a universal practice. Foreign potentates and statesmen have been as anxious to explain policies on the Letter Page as the country parson watching the skies to describe the glories of the

Northern Lights. . . . George du Maurier, in *Punch* many years ago, showed an angry Englishman addressing a foreign hotel manager: 'Jusque vous marquez mes mots, j'écrirai au *Times*!' But alert eyes are kept on the merely splenetic. The purpose of the correspondence is to call up and review the whole of contemporary civilization. . . . And without severe censorship there would be little room for any other feature. . . .

This censorship is exerted over a flow of between 250 to 300 letters a day, which rises to between 400 and 500 during a controversy or election campaign. That totals between 80,000 and 90,000 letters a year—more than twice the number received by the New York *Times* letters editor, although the London paper has only half the circulation.

One reason why the New York *Times* gets far fewer letters on a per capita count is that its censorship of writing readers is far more severe than that in London. For example:

—Little criticism of New York *Times* news coverage is permitted. As Edward W. Barrett wrote in *CJR*, "The *Times* long had a letters column open to those who felt that their utterances had been misrepresented, their identity confused, or simply that a vital fact had been garbled in a news story. This is no longer the case."

—No writer can appear in the *Times* letters section more than once every six months, a house rule that effectively kills the kind of absorbing controversies to which readers are drawn day after day in the London *Times*. (It should also be added that the New York system is unfair. An outside critic is helpless—regardless of skill, station, or purpose—in trying to get his views on the *Times* editorial page more than twice a year. With the odds so stacked in its favor, the house can't lose. Moreover, if a reader's letter is distorted by other letter writers, he either has to wait six months in the frail hope of being given a

chance to straighten out the record, or he has to go through the demeaning process of finding someone else to answer for him.)

—Neither has John Oakes permitted many letters on the same subject to appear the same day. (Each day is supposed to provide a "representative selection.") Not only does this policy mean the elimination of the glorious, multi-missive, pyrotechnic displays arising from disputes in the London *Times* letters section; it means that the amount of outside opinion is arbitrarily kept low, and is therefore inaccurately reflected, in times of great public debate.

—Humor and casual comment are also censored, which means, presumably, that those who write in this vein are not considered representative of anything worth representing.

—Letters to the *Times* of London can run long if the topic merits it or the subject demands it. The New York *Times* is less flexible. For example, if the *Times* endorses a dolt for political office, how does a reader prove the foolishness of the choice without citing the candidate's record? But try to do that in three paragraphs or less. [See "How I Tried to Write a Letter to the *Times* and Found Myself Cut to the Quick," *CJR*, Winter, 1966-67.]

In New York six people handle letters. In London three people deal with twice as much mail. Correspondence arrives in a large, one-room office manned by Geoffrey Woolley, the letters editor, and by assistant editors Norman Grenyer and George Hill. Burdened with the knowledge that some humans have tried for agonizing years to get past them into print, the three godlike figures eliminate all but thirty-five or forty letters, which are then sent to the editor, William Rees-Mogg. From his seat of Final Judgment, Rees-Mogg selects the works of thirteen or fourteen writ-

ers who will actually be immortalized in print. (As with the New York *Times*, all letters are acknowledged; the rejected get condolences appropriate to their status and ability.) In print, the final batch of letters adds up to more than three full columns on weekdays. On Saturdays readers get five full columns.

Even with all that space, pressure is tremendous. So letters editor Woolley is grateful to his superiors for devising a "spill-over system," which permits worthy contributions to be used in a separate letters section in the *Times* Business News, in the women's pages, or in a column of miscellany called "The *Times* Diary." Now and then a letter is thought to be of such general interest that the author is invited to expand it into a byline article. Perhaps the greatest compliment that can be paid to the *Times* letters section is to report that some so honored would have preferred to stay, financially unrewarded, in the letters columns.

And the pressure is growing. The past fifteen years have seen a great increase in the number of letters submitted, only in part explainable by rising circulation, which now stands at 411,000. "We hear from people who were almost never represented before," says Woolley. "Some of these new writers are clearly the first-generation graduates of the improved and expanded school system. For example, we have always had letters from union leaders, but now we get them from union members. Because of heightened interest in local government, more people write about that. And because of geographically widened circulation, we get and print more letters from abroad—especially from Americans and officials in the new African nations."

There is no formula for determining balance; no measuring of column inches during election campaigns to see if the parties come out even. There is, however, an effort made by Messrs. Woolley, Grenyer,

and Hill to reflect majority feeling while giving the widest possible hearing to minority views. For example, thousands of irate letters descended on the *Times* as a result of MP Enoch Powell's proposals to further restrict admission into England of nonwhite citizens of the Commonwealth and to repatriate those who were already here.

"Out of every 100 letters, only 10 might be in favor of the Powell position," says Woolley, "but if 85 of the 90 anti-Powell letters were all much the same, and if the 10 pro-Powell letters were all quite different, we would print a disproportionately large number of the latter while still printing a greater total of the latter."

Woolley's attitude toward humor and casuals also is vastly different from that prevailing on Forty-Fourth Street—or on many other American newspapers. "It has always puzzled me," he says, "that a nation so famed for its humorists provides no place for humor from the readers of its newspapers. We try to find something to break up the gray days. We feel especially disappointed if we fail to come up with a grace note at the end of the page."

He suggested that I look up correspondence about damage wrought by gray squirrels and the resultant controversy over whether their numbers could be lowered by eating them—and, if so, how. Clippings on the subject were nearly an inch thick. One letter began:

May 1, as an executor of the gray squirrel whose fatal crossing of my lawn and successful emergence in a casserole you recorded on Dec. 2, thank you for the post-humous fame which your obituary notice has brought to the deceased?

The author then went on to describe a deluge of phone calls and letters that had followed his original communication to the *Times*. A few had brought censure; most had brought commendations and

recipes. He concluded:

I am today the richer by much new knowledge and several good dinners. I needed no such proof that, to students of an obscure subject, a letter published in the *Times* was as good as a travelling scholarship. . . .

Dozens of distinguished men were stirred to write by a controversy over how late in winter one can be stung by a wasp. After a number of letters claiming records for the deepest-into-winter sting, one reader wrote that the editors must be weary of the debate. If so, they could halt the letters by opening an enclosed matchbox in which there was a live wasp, thereby assuring that they would be the last to have been stung by a wasp.

Can you imagine such goings-on on Forty-Fourth Street?

Like all editors, says Woolley, he and his staff on occasion feel the hot breath of writers who remonstrate that a correspondent with inadequate credentials and inferior prose was chosen over them; and some measure column inches to see whether *The Others* were given more space than they were. "But there really isn't a great deal of this," he says. "We fortunately do enjoy public trust."

On the west side of the Atlantic, the lack of such public trust is a deeply disturbing fact. It would be absurd to blame much of this disquiet on the New York *Times* letters department. But the *Times* does set standards, and therefore the way it and other newspapers handle protest, suggestions, and corrections from the public might provide—as Edward Barrett wrote in these pages—"one clue to the seemingly growing complaints about the media."

ROBERT H. YOAKUM

Mr. Yoakum writes light letters and light comments for the Sunday *Times* of London and U.S. newspapers.

## Covering the White House hunger conference

■ There is probably no one way to cover a White House conference. But since eight have been held in the last decade and more are due, news media might draw a few lessons from the less-than-penetrating coverage of the most recent one. It was the White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health held last December.

Mr. Nixon had announced the conference the previous May. It was, said advance publicity, to be the President's "crash program" to respond to "the demand for action to eliminate the canker of hunger and malnutrition from American life." This was not going to be "just another" White House conference, aides assured reporters.

The President opened the conference in the mammoth Sheraton-Park Hotel by reiterating his May statement that the moment was "past" to put an end to hunger "for all time." He didn't simply accept the responsibility, he said, he "claimed" it. He proposed no fresh action. But at the end of three days his 3,000 invitees urged him to take action on forty specific demands.

If people are going hungry in a land of plenty, they said, then the President surely should do no less than he does for victims of hurricanes or earthquakes. They called on him to declare a hunger emergency, greatly enlarge his welfare plan by working for a \$5,500 guaranteed annual income for a family of four (instead of the \$1,600 he had proposed), provide free and nutritious breakfasts and lunches for all schoolchildren, and take food programs out of the hands of the Agriculture Department and the "agro-business" lobby in Congress and move them to Health, Education, and Welfare.

The press and television, however, never quite gave people the flavor of the conferees' concern and their town-meeting mood. They didn't pin down how the President intended to keep his promise to end hunger, or how his Administration was facing the other serious social and health issues discussed. Or so it seemed from the findings of six graduate students in communication at American University in Washington who examined the conference as a case study in the reporting of government news.

The team interviewed all the principal figures in the conference, members of the twenty-six technical panels and eight civic-action task forces that monitored the panel recommendations. They watched the newsmen in action, then interviewed correspondents from various major newspapers—the New York *Times*, the Washington *Post* and *Evening Star*, the Los Angeles *Times*, the Chicago *Daily News* and *Sun-Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*—and reporters for AP, UPI, news chains such as Knight and Scripps-Howard, and for many smaller papers that maintain bureaus in Washington. They also talked to correspondents for CBS, NBC, ABC, Westinghouse, National Educational Television, the U. S. Information Agency, and a number of individual TV and radio stations.

"Did you do a good job?" Scripps-Howard's Bill Steif was asked. "Yes, given our limitations. Ideally, no." Jim Batten of Knight Newspapers said that all the time he had the fear that "maybe I wasn't communicating the substance of the conference." A number of the correspondents told the interviewers that they just were not satisfied that they had explained how bringing 3,000 people to Washington for three days at a cost of \$1 million had (or had not) helped the millions of Americans who have too little to eat, or millions more who every day eat too much rich food full of additives and preservatives.



What went wrong? The conference was, first of all, a complicated, formless affair—a giant congress with panels all meeting at once over three days. Hundreds of harried reporters rushed about trying to make some sense of the sprawling agenda and official claims for it. The physical problem alone was formidable.

The reporters had to work their way through the euphoric analysis of conference aides, and the skepticism of “spokesmen” for the poor. The conference was fragmented, news space was scarce that week, and many of them had come from working on unrelated stories. Further, the White House had ruled out the usual full debate in order, it said, to keep the conference “streamlined.” Presidential aides even moved to bar network cameras from the critical panel discussions on food stamps (just three weeks after Vice President Agnew had caustically observed that the only “censorship” he knew of was what the networks did to Mr. Nixon).

The *New York Times'* Jack Rosenthal, himself a craftsmanlike former information officer for the Justice and State Departments, suggests that conference press officer John Edwards might have helped by arranging briefing sessions with panel chairmen. Many reporters said they just “did not get much help” of any kind from Edwards. Newsmen who report government need someone who can feed them background quickly and anticipate their needs. At some crucial moments, the press spokesman did not even know where conference chairman Jean Mayer was.

The Washington correspondents by no means settled for the handouts and press feedings. But they spent too much time on the “inside politics” of the conference—the elbowing by the White House and its critics for headline-making claims about the conference—and too little on the issues.

Newsmen unintentionally built up the President's image by treating the conference as a sort of big

ballgame which Mr. Nixon won or lost on political points totally apart from the issues raised. (Jack Rosenthal, for one, later confessed regret at overconcentration on politics; to his credit, he was one of the few reporters who even ventured an assessment of the Administration's performance.) In the end, said one Administration official afterwards, Mr. Nixon instead had projected “the image of action” where there really was none.

There was scattered interpretation, but not the aggressive analysis that would have alerted the public to the fact that the Senate was pushing the President to spend much more on food, and that the Nixon Administration continued to oppose Senate-approved bills which would have liberalized both the food stamp and school-lunch programs far more than the President had done. Nor did the press point out that the Administration cut back on what all the experts agreed were crucial government nutrition surveys of the poor and other groups. At best, the reporters' questioning of Mr. Nixon's response to the conference urgings on such measures was buried on inside pages. In many cases, it went unreported.

The herd of reporters—nearly 400 were accredited, including by White House admission some lobbyists—thundered into the story for three days, then disappeared into the sunset. No major news organization investigated how the hungry poor were faring six months after the “historic” conference. None at that point reported what happened to recommendations that the President swore would not gather dust.

Reporters should have done more to trace the growth of the conference's purposeful spirit. Nearly everyone missed its origins at a Chicago task force meeting except for Dave Dugan, who sat in and later moderated an NET symposium. The three commercial networks did scarcely any in-depth reporting on

the conference.

Reporters could have examined the personalities of the men who moved the conference—the many-faceted Mayer, for example, or the respected Mexican-American leader Herman Gallegos. They could have done more on the sometimes revealing infighting among leaders of the poor. They could have analyzed the waning of the once-generous moral, political, and financial support for these crusaders, and their post-conference efforts to put together an operative lobby and to turn to local organizing in the neediest areas.

They should have followed up. What effect has the conference had on the food industry, or on the attitudes of middle America? What impact has it had on the poor? What should the public know about White House conferences to put the next two (on children this year; on youth and on aging in 1971) in perspective? Should White House conferences be changed? Should they be held at all?

The student interviewers found that there was little consultation in advance between editors and reporters over how the conference should be covered. One TV correspondent said he was disgusted by the lack of planning by his network for this important story. Another national TV reporter only toned down his outrage when he was cautioned by his bureau chief.

It doesn't seem so much a question of the news media's resources as of their priorities. Dozens of correspondents are assigned at great cost to cover a whirlwind tour by the President or Vice President. Hundreds of reporters chronicle often vacuous political campaigns. Hundreds of man hours are spent on reporting tear gas barrages and outcries of discontent, but much less time and energy are spent on serious analysis of how government treats with the problems that cause the discontent. Isn't this the story the media really should be pur-

suings in times when it seems easier to give up on the system than to examine ways it can be made to work?

LEWIS W. WOLFSON

Mr. Wolfson is an associate professor in the Department of Communication at American University. Graduate students who participated in his study were Martyn Chase, Kenneth Dalecki, Ben Fisher, Boyd Levett, Phill Niklaus, and John Reynolds.

## The underground GI press

Remember: military targets only! Be sure you hit nothing except bases, dumps, roads, factories, bridges, trains, ships, houses, fields, forests, buildings, vehicles, or anything else that may look suspicious.

—Cartoon, *Rough Draft*

Beware! The big crack-down on mustaches, sideburns, and "long" hair is coming. . . . Bullshit! Recently, the CO of HQ & Main Support Co., 198th Maint Bn at Fort Knox gave the order that all mustaches must go. . . . Well, a couple of guys threatened to go to the IG. Within twenty-four hours that order was rescinded.

*Fun, Travel, Adventure*

■ These are two examples of the personal, sometimes amateurish, always passionate journalism of the "underground" GI press—the officially frowned on, widely read and circulated new kind of servicemen's reading matter. Nearly twenty now are in existence, and their formats are simple, ranging from mimeographed sheets to photooffset papers. Their press runs vary, some claiming as many as 5,000 readers. All are irreverent; all are vigorously written.

Still, the lives of these papers

remain as precarious as the traditional secret European revolutionary presses they seem to emulate. Editors are usually anonymous. Most writers will not sign their names to letters or stories. An editor of *Fatigue Press* (Fort Hood) was "busted" on a heroin charge. Roger Priest, who puts out *OM: The Liberation Newsletter* in Washington, D. C., was court-martialled by the Navy.

Copies usually are handed out free in coffeehouses, airline and bus terminals, and other off-post areas where servicemen congregate, and then are quietly passed around to trusted buddies. *Rough Draft*, however, has received approval for open distribution at Fort Eustis on an issue-by-issue basis, and the Department of the Army, in a memo entitled "Guidance on Dissent," has affirmed that publication and possession of underground newspapers are protected in general by First Amendment guarantees—assuming no interference with morale or combat operations. As noted by the *Freedom of Information Digest* in a summary of the memo in September-October, 1969, the fact that a publication is critical of government policies or officials is not in itself a ground for denial [of distribution rights], and a commander "may not prohibit possession of an unauthorized publication," though "intent to distribute the publication in violation of post regulations may constitute an offense.

Most papers' journalistic posture is one of defiance. Their mastheads carry prominently some variation on these statements:

This paper is your personal property. It cannot be taken away for any reason.

—*The Ultimate Weapon* (Fort Dix)

To expose those in authority who have betrayed the trust of the

American people by using their power to deprive men of their constitutional rights.

—*Rough Draft* (Tidewater Area, Virginia)

Some of their selection of subjects is predictable: demonstrations, riots in army camps, meetings, lists of friendly lawyers and organizations, instructions for contacting the Inspector General, and general news of the peace movement. What is unique is their approach. The regular press, for example, covered the Presidio "Mutiny" without favoritism. Sensationalism and shock grew out of interviews with military authorities together with guided tours of the Presidio stockade. Once the passions of the moment had died, systematic inquiry into the lives of military prisoners ended. The GI press, having nobody in the Presidio, reprinted releases originally written for civilian underground papers. Then correspondents looked into their own camp stockades from the point of view of the prisoners. "What the hell will the brass show you in a conducted tour through a stockade that a guy who's been in one can't tell you more honestly?" asked one GI editor.

*Fun, Travel, Adventure* (Fort Knox) ran a two-part series on "conditions at Fort Knox's stockade." The reporter, a former inmate, wrote of extreme overcrowding, insufficient food and winter clothing, medical neglect, and "extremely rough handling" and beatings. He said:

There was an IG inspection. . . . 100's (sic) of prisoners were 'paroled' for the day so that the inhuman overcrowding wouldn't be noted as a gig. . . . The next day, the prisoners were stuffed back into the stockade. . . .

After a year in Nam, where the harassment . . . is at least kept to a minimum, they then return to



the states and are forced to do the same candy-assed bullshit. So a guy can't take it anymore and splits.

Commented one returned GI: "Isn't there one newspaper in this country that cares enough about us to haunt the stockades and report what really goes on?"

The war, of course, is Number One topic. *Rough Draft* printed a letter from Vietnam on its first page:

I tell you in all honesty that out of the 100-plus men here at HQ, you will find not one man who would state we are right in being here. . . .

There was this cartoon. A Pentagon general asks his aide:

"When's your birthday, Rigney? November 28th? Fine, that makes it 2811 enemy casualties for the week."

Wherever there is a military unit, such items can provide an invaluable catharsis for the frustrations of military life—for which few sounding boards are available. Thus one can read such classic complaints as these:

SSG and Mrs. Richard Prim are very pleased with their new cocktail bar. SSG Prim had a couple of trainees at D Troop, 5th Recon, build it for him with army materials and tools in the supply room,

on army time.

—FTA

"Lifer of the Month Award." Presented in February 1969 to 1 SG John Waters of A Co., Special Troops for a truly outstanding accomplishment — the Bulletin Board Orderly, continuous 8-hour shifts of staring (no reading allowed) at the bulletin board.

—Ultimate Weapon

We have discovered that the Special Troops S-4 is using its lawn mowing detail to cut grass for colonels in the vicinity of Post Hqs to include Colonel Weddles' own quarters.

—Shakedown

So it goes. Getting back at the untouchables. Embarrassing them. Calling their enemies' attention to their transgressions, real or imagined. Resorting to ridicule, the major weapon against the props of a rigid military society.

In the end, the GI papers remain amateurs, for now at least. Their content is uneven, their style sometimes turgid, their humor often simply not funny. But they also have wit and sensitivity. Their writers are angrier than any other generation of conscriptees. Their future, of course, is impossible to predict, but this much is clear: so long as the war grinds on endlessly and men are compelled to join, and so long as the mass media pre-

tend that military life is like a television serial, the GI press will continue to thrive in circulation and influence. Given no responsive media outlet, men—young or old—will conceive and nurture their own.

MURRAY POLNER

Mr. Polner, a Long Island resident, has written for *Commonweal*, *Trans-action*, and other magazines.

## Bedlam on campus?

■ Just as the news media herald the opening of the football, basketball, or baseball seasons, it has become customary for many to trumpet the onset of the "campus unrest" season. Will Harvard erupt, or Columbia or Cornell or Kent State or Wisconsin or Berkeley? The questions were asked anew this fall in editorials, features, and reports of political speeches. And fair questions they were—if based on a semblance of fact and an expectation of presenting answers in perspective.

What are the facts on campus unrest? Unfortunately, authoritative data on post-Cambodia protest last spring was not available at this writing. But the Urban Research Corp., a Chicago organization headed by a former HEW colleague of John W. Gardner, has made a major survey of 1969. In a study covering 232 campuses from January through June of 1969, it found:

—76 per cent of the protests resulted in "no destruction or violence of any kind."

—60 per cent of all protests "did not interrupt college routine."

—"Non-negotiable demands" were made in only 6 per cent of protests; "ultimatums of various kinds"

in only 13 per cent.

—The "incidence of war as a major factor in protests was far less than the incidence of race or 'student power' issues."

The report added:

Concerning the nature of black protests on campus, we found a much different pattern than the widely held impressions that they have: a) usually been violent; b) have been 'led' by radical white students; and c) that black separatism has been the key issue.

The variation between the public impression and what seems to be the facts may derive from the news media's concentration on such single incidents as happened at Cornell, where protesting blacks were photographed with guns. The more violent-oriented incidents have made splashier news and may have contributed to what our findings lead us to conclude are badly mistaken public impressions. . . .

Another commonly held theory that our study seems to refute is that most college protest has been led by small radical New Left organizations. We found participation in protests to be much more broadly based. The New Left participated in only 28 per cent of all protests. . . .

Generally speaking, protests did not achieve their stated aims. At the end of the six-month period of our study, some 69 per cent of all demands presented in all protests remained unsatisfied.

In an American Council on Education study of campus disruption, "violent protest" such as the breaking or wrecking of a campus building or its furnishings was found on 3.4 per cent of U. S. college campuses, or roughly at eighty out of 2,400 institutions of higher learning. Moreover, in a report "Campus Tensions: Analysis and Recommendations," a special American Council on Education committee headed by former Xerox executive Sol M. Linowitz stated:

Institutions have, in general, responded firmly to violence. Fifty-five per cent of the institutions that experienced violence during 1968-69 had occasion to call in off-

campus police. Roughly the same percentage of institutions report that some demonstrators were arrested. Some major civil or institutional action (arrest, indictment, dismissal, or suspension) was taken against individual students at three-fourths of the institutions where there were violent protests.

What have the media been saying? In most cases, not quite what such surveys have discerned. In fact, in studying editorials, columns, and news stories about individual events one finds a pattern of generalization and misrepresentation that, cumulatively, could lead the public to almost a fantasy view of the situation.

In a May 2, 1969, editorial, for example, the Elgin, Ill., *Courier* fumed, "At Harvard . . . terrorists bodily carried faculty members from a building." Yet, according to the *Boston Globe*, it was one dean, Burris Young, who was "picked up bodily by a young man and carried outside."

On May 19, 1969, a *U. S. News & World Report* story on "campus violence" reported that "still the campus wars went on." It added: "In the background, college buildings blazed. Arson was reported from one campus after another." Perhaps, but of seven schools mentioned, fires were reported at only three. All three were on the East Coast.

And in a *Time* magazine article, ROTC: THE PROTESTORS' NEXT TARGET, the magazine warned of the "next wave of campus protest"—but found only five schools where the "wave" might have hit. Four were in the Ivy League. The others? They are, *Time* said, at "avant-garde campuses."

The Cornell case alone resulted in a virtual five-foot shelf of errors and misinterpretation. In a James J. Kilpatrick column published in the *Chicago Daily News* on May 8, 1969, for example, the writer said, "At Cornell, everyone knew precisely which black students were involved in the seizure of Willard



Straight Hall. . . Why weren't these students expelled?"

It is doubtful, first of all, if "everyone" knew who they were. And even if someone knew each of the 100-odd students, he would also have known that they weren't expelled because, more than two weeks before Kilpatrick asked the question, the university had promised them they wouldn't be expelled. What is not mentioned is that for several days before the column appeared, the Tompkins County Grand Jury was preparing charges of criminal trespass against eighteen black students involved in the occupation of the building—a more serious punishment, one would think, than being expelled.

*Newsweek*, in reporting the agreement that ended the "occupation," said that "a full faculty meeting would be called the next day to drop the judicial proceedings against the five students originally involved in the December disturbances; Cornell would give the blacks legal help to overcome any civil charges from the Straight occupation . . . provide police protection for blacks and a full investigation of the cross-burning incident."

The Cornell administrators did not agree—and in fact had no power to agree—to "drop" the judicial proceedings. What was agreed was that the dean of the faculty

would recommend to the full faculty that the proceedings be dropped. The faculty, not the administration, had the power to do this. The administration also did not promise to "give the blacks legal help." In fact, the blacks were told before the agreement was signed that the university would not use its money to defend them.

As for providing police protection for blacks, what Cornell agreed to do was provide protection only for a black girls' co-op and for the Afro-American Society's center. The "full investigation" of the cross-burning incident—and the police protection for the student center—had begun even before the sit-in at Willard Straight Hall. Not mentioned in *Newsweek's* account was what the blacks agreed to do—get out of the student union and help the university set up a campus judiciary system.

Many writers simply fail to understand how a university operates, and this failing is magnified by writing many stories like National League baseball reports, the most exciting disturbance leading the wrapup, followed by the second most exciting, and so on until the day's disturbances had been "covered." For example, a Hartford *Courant* story combined the seizure of the Cornell student union with a hunger strike at the University of

Chicago, two "arson-caused" fires at Brooklyn College, a vote at Brown University in Rhode Island to phase out ROTC, and a strike at Harvard. Another paper combined a bomb explosion at San Francisco State with the story of forty students peacefully picketing the president of the University of Minnesota.

So readers could be excused if they began to think a protest about ROTC at Harvard had something to do with protests about hiring a black fund-raiser at Mills College in Oakland, Calif. Indeed, based on much news media coverage and comment, readers might be excused if they failed to understand the nature and scope of campus protest at all; particularly in an election year, when uncritical reporting of and comment on self-serving statements by various candidates can only confuse the picture further.

Some reporting and comment have been excellent—accurate, thoughtful, restrained. But too many islands of inadequacy persist. American journalism must do better.

JOHN BREEN

The author, a former reporter, copy editor, and editorial writer, is assistant professor of journalism at the University of Connecticut.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:  
THE CURRENT ILLEGAL STRIKE OF POSTAL WORKERS IS APPARENTLY SPREADING,  
AND INDEED THREATENS TO ENGULF THE ENTIRE NATION. WE WISH TO  
CONVEY TO YOU, MR. PRESIDENT, OUR DEEP CONCERN FOR WHAT MAY BECOME  
A HINDRANCE TO THE DAILY AFFAIRS OF GOVERNMENT, SERIOUS SOCIAL  
DISRUPTION AND AN ECONOMIC DRAIN AT A TIME WHEN THE COUNTRY CAN  
LEAST TOLERATE IT. IN TERMS OF OUR OWN ENTERPRISE, 58.3 8,194,094-538  
-- WHICH PUBLISHES AND DISTRIBUTES BY MAIL SOME 13 MILLION MAGAZINES  
IN THE UNITED STATES EACH WEEK -- THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCE OF THE  
POSTAL STRIKE CANNOT BE MINIMIZED. MILLIONS OF READERS WITH  
PRE-PAID SUBSCRIPTIONS WILL NOT RECEIVE THEIR MAGAZINES WHEN THEY  
ARE ENTITLED TO. ADVERTISERS WHO HAVE INVESTED MILLIONS OF DOLLARS  
IN OUR MAGAZINES WILL SEE THEIR MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGNS

#### Best left foot forward

—Telegram from Andrew Heiskell,  
Chairman, Time, Inc.,  
March 20.

## Books noted

EARLY WRITINGS: WALTER LIPPMANN. Introduction and Annotations by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. Liveright. \$7.50.

☐ In 1913, three years after graduation from Harvard, Walter Lippmann was asked to plan and edit a new weekly called *New Republic*. For six years, from the first issue in 1914, Lippmann contributed both signed and unsigned writing on events and personalities of the time. Now many of the articles—all brief and topical for the period—have been collected, with a foreword and annotations by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. Even in his twenties, Lippmann was eloquent, perceptive, and deeply philosophical, with a remarkable historical perspective that accurately foresaw many of the problems that afflict man today. Inclusion of longer essays from other sources would have added balance; but as it stands this volume is of undoubted historical value.

### COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW Subscriber Service

**CORRESPONDENCE:**  
Please include your address label when writing about your subscription to help us serve you promptly.

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS:**  
When you are moving, please let us know at least five weeks in advance. Affix your magazine address label in space to the right and print new address below.

Affix label here. If you have no label handy, print old address here.

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip

New address here:

name		
address		
city	state	zip

POLITICS AND THE PRESS. Edited by Richard W. Lee. Acropolis. \$6.95.

☐ Prof. Lee, of the University of Maryland's Department of Journalism, was given the task of anthologizing papers from his school's Distinguished Lecture Series, and a refreshingly varied and useful volume it is, despite the year's least attractive typography. Contributors include George Gallup, Jr., Davis S. Broder, William L. Rivers, Otis Chandler, William Raspberry, Philip Potter, and Herbert G. Klein.

RADIO, TELEVISION, AND AMERICAN POLITICS. By Edward W. Chester. Sheed and Ward. \$7.50.

☐ As television becomes more tightly entwined with the political process, the history of the political uses of broadcasting becomes more important. Thus this book by a University of Texas historian, though somewhat flat in style and mired in detail at times, deserves notice as a potentially valuable research resource on local and regional as well as national personalities and incidents.

LORDS AND LABORERS OF THE PRESS: Men Who Fashioned the Modern British Newspaper. By Linton Andrews and H. A. Taylor. Southern Illinois University Press. \$10.

☐ Written by veteran British journalists somewhat in the "I-Call-On" style, this book too often fails to dig deeply or take even moderately critical views of its subjects. Nonetheless they are so influential a lot—including Lord Beaverbrook, Cecil Harmsworth King, Viscount Northcliffe, and Lord Thomson of Fleet—that even a popularized recounting of their careers is worthwhile.

TELEVISION: A Selection of Readings from TV Guide Magazine. Edited by Barry G. Cole. Free Press. \$12.50.

☐ Brevity sometimes is the soul of superficiality, and the elements of this anthology—like its subject—sometimes suffer from that trait. But some distinguished bylines and timely sections on news quality, Vietnam, civil disorders, politics, and general social effects of TV are of sufficient consequence and quotability to make the book worthy of attention by students of broadcasting.

## Unfinished business

pledge to silence) on me and the sanctuary given him by the press.

It is warming to see a constructive, reflective editor like Sherrod putting the picture in better perspective.

MATTHEW J. CULLIGAN  
The Diebold Group, Inc.  
New York City

## The 'Post's' Last Days

### TO THE REVIEW:

I was very pleased to see Robert Sherrod speak up in behalf of truth regarding the demise of the *Saturday Evening Post* ["Did the 'Post' Have to Die?" Summer]. I, too, have read all of the books about this period, and I have decided that it was just too complex a situation (and peopled with prejudiced executives) for anybody to have full knowledge of everything that happened. Sherrod's valiant struggle to hold the magazine and the company together in those murky days desperately required better definition, even in the form of his modest description.

A host of unknowledgeable reviewers have praised Otto Friedrich's book so highly because of its style that they have accepted without question his opinion of the editorial quality of the *Post*. Even Sherrod's unemotional listing of the contents of a sample issue shows how weak it was.

JOHN MACK CARTER  
Editor-Publisher  
Ladies' Home Journal

### TO THE REVIEW:

I found the Sherrod article very interesting and by far the most objective. No surprise—that would be Bob's way.

Perhaps some day someone will comment on the unevenness of any struggle between a reporter or editor and a businessman in the public and trade press. Thirty years of education, preparation, and hard work were adversely affected by an editor's public attack (despite his

### TO THE REVIEW:

Robert Sherrod's essay review has the right note of passion and most importantly rings exactly true. I'm pleased for journalism's historians, and for all the still-working mass-circulation magazine editors like myself who suffer the misconceptions promoted by Otto Friedrich. Now we can tell our gullible critics to look at Sherrod's article.

DAVID MANESS  
New York City

### TO THE REVIEW:

I have always maintained that it takes about a dozen years of unswerving management wrongness to kill any major magazine. At the *Post*, it apparently took eighteen or twenty. Maybe that is its greatest tribute.

WADE H. NICHOLS  
Editor  
Good Housekeeping

## About Apollo 13

### TO THE REVIEW:

Stuart Auerbach's self-serving attack on, among others, the Associated Press' coverage of Apollo 13 ["Apollo 13 and the Wires," Summer] cannot go unanswered. In each specific case where Auerbach raises the "scare" cry against our coverage, the facts put things in an entirely different light.

Charge 1: Stories reporting that

the ship was off course and needed to correct its path or be lost were a "nadir of bad reporting," scare journalism at its worst. The facts:

We have the word of flight director Glynn Lunney, who told us then that 13 was "farther off course than any other moon flight." Lunney also said he was confident and we so reported. Contrary to what Auerbach says, NASA never before had defined a free return trajectory as one that required still more correction to get the crew back to earth. According to AP's veteran space writer, Howard Benedict, "free return" had heretofore always meant that the ship would get back—off target, maybe, but it would get back—if no more changes were made. At least that was the definition before Auerbach told the *Review's* readers that it was something else. And, as astronaut Lovell himself said after the flight, their problem at this point was "unique" because they did not have the usual means for figuring out the spacecraft's attitude.

After trying to tear us apart over this point, Auerbach then tosses a bone to the news services with the admission that the spacecraft's crippled condition "added a new element." New element, indeed. It was *the* element that made this a critical maneuver, though one whose success NASA said it was confident of. And so we reported.

Charge 2: We had the crew facing death from carbon dioxide because an alarm rang, when it just meant they had to change air-cleansing canisters. The facts:

Here's how AP first reported this problem:

### SPACE CENTER, HOUSTON (AP)

—Three troubled American astronauts discovered carbon dioxide building up in the hobbled spacecraft Tuesday night as they sped on a hurry-up course toward home. Mission Control ordered a quick, makeshift air-cleansing device installed. But it was too soon to tell whether the device had worked or how serious the carbon dioxide levels were.

Even in hindsight, free of deadline pressure, that is not exaggerated, hysterical, or inaccurate. The

astronauts hurriedly taped together a rig—"shade-tree engineering," they called it—with cardboard from a flight manual and tubing from an unused urine drain. That's hardly a response to an expected problem. There certainly had been discussion of dioxide earlier. But the developments put new urgency to the case, forcing them to hurriedly find an improved way to use canisters from the crippled command ship. And the newspaper of one of the reporters Auerbach quotes as critical of us—the New York *Times*—called this the most serious of Apollo 13's many on-board problems.

Charge 3: That one wire service bulletin called a battery alarm "a new emergency" when in fact it was just a bad sensor. The facts:

AP said, *not* in a bulletin, that the astronauts reported "a new problem"—not an emergency. And as soon as NASA found the trouble, we reported same. And thereafter we called it a "passing mystery."

Charges 4 and 5: That a wire service (unnamed) reported at one point that the ship was falling apart and, at another, that the astronauts were "in danger of freezing." The facts:

AP never reported any such thing. We did say that temperatures dropped to "near freezing." After the flight, astronaut Lovell said they dropped to 38 degrees. Near freezing, I'd say.

Charge 6: That AP had a lead that the ship was "tumbling out of control" when it was in the manually set passive thermal mode—the barbecue mode. The facts:

I assume this refers to a story, the night of the mishap, in the body of which we reported that Lovell said venting gases were giving the ship unwanted pitch and roll. We later quoted Swigert as saying the ship was "twisting out of control." We reported he worked at the problem for a moment and then told the ground, "Ah, that got it. It stopped." Swigert and Lovell would seem to be more expert witnesses than Auerbach.

Charge 7: That, quoting one of Auerbach's newspaperman friends, "some smart asses from New York" came in to take over the story. The facts:

The man in charge throughout the flight at Houston was a Texan (transplanted) who has supervised our space coverage since Gemini. Two men from New York worked on the story, one a qualified and veteran space writer, the other a desk editor, both of whom worked under a veteran supervisor. The article's suggestion that Benedict, a man of considerable stature in the space news field, would permit his reputation to be sullied for the sake of a headline is preposterous.

Two additional asides which pale in significance next to the major misstatements of the article but which are worth mention:

1) One of the newspapers the *Review* used to illustrate "scare headlines" was carrying a headline based on its own rewrite of AP copy, a rewrite which took an element we had buried and made it the lead.

And 2) A post-flight story, by one of the newspaper reporters Auerbach cites in support of his flimsy case, said in the lead that Apollo "almost did not get back from the moon" and, in the second paragraph, spoke of the "perilous, nerve-racking flight." Now, is such only "scare" stuff when the news services use it?

LOUIS D. BOCCARDI  
Managing Editor  
Associated Press

#### TO THE REVIEW:

I must take exception to the contention of Stuart Auerbach that "Television . . . fell down . . . at the beginning of the [Apollo 13] emergency."

ABC News was neither slow nor late on this story. Our science editor, Jules Bergman, heard the Lovell statement, "Hey, we've got a problem here!" while monitoring the air-to-ground transmissions. (ABC News keeps a fulltime watch on all space flights, with a command post manned and attentive to all air-to-ground communications, so it was no accident that our people heard the transmission.) As quickly as our flash studio could be readied, Bergman was on the air, giving Ameri-

can television audiences their first word of the emergency.

That went out at 10:46:23 p.m. More bulletins followed, and finally, at 12:23 a.m., ABC preempted the *Dick Cavett Show* for fulltime, all-night coverage of the emergency. The other networks joined extended coverage at the conclusions of their late-night talk shows.

ELMER LOWER  
President  
ABC News

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Auerbach comments, *A point-by-point answer to Mr. Boccardi's letter would take too long, so I will concentrate on his first two points. "Charge 1":*

*I was at the change-of-shift briefing on the morning of April 15 when NASA flight directors said that Apollo 13 would need a mid-course correction to return to earth. (Howard Benedict, AP's excellent and highly respected space writer, was not. He was in the AP office, across the street from the Manned Spacecraft Center. He couldn't even listen to the press conference there because NASA decided to keep broadcasting the air-to-ground communication on the public address system instead of the briefing.)*

*I was surprised to learn about the midcourse correction, and after the briefing went to the front of the room and began questioning the flight directors. They all assured me that the spaceship was on course, by the NASA definition; that the midcourse correction was a routine maneuver, even with the added difficulties posed by the crippled spaceship; and that they didn't feel that it placed the astronauts in any added danger. I took their word then and, frankly, was shocked at some of the wire reports.*

*(In AP's defense, UPI was first off the mark on that one. I was told by AP reporters who were at the space center that New York kept pressing them to match UPI.)*

*I read my "CJR" description of NASA's definition of a free-return trajectory to John P. Mayer, head of the Mission Planning and Analysis Division at the Manned Space-*



craft Center. Mayer, the man in charge of charting the path for the Apollo 13 return to earth, confirmed my definition as the correct one. That's good enough for me.

"Charge 2": The AP story on the carbon dioxide just doesn't square with the facts as put forth clearly in the transcript of the air-to-ground communications before the alarm went off and in post-mission briefings. NASA officials in Houston were concerned because the carbon dioxide scrubbers in the command module—canisters of lithium hydroxide—were a different size from those in the lunar module and therefore couldn't be plugged directly into the LM's system. So they devised a jerrybuilt rig on the ground, using supplies available in the spaceship, to connect canisters in the command module to the LM. Then they told the astronauts exactly how to do this. The astronauts did it, and one of their most serious problems was solved.

It was while they were setting up this rig that ground controllers told them to allow the carbon dioxide level in the cabin to go higher than usual by moving the alarm up. Then, ground controllers said, change canisters when the alarm goes off. Which the astronauts did.

There indeed was "shade-tree engineering" in adapting the command module's lithium hydroxide canisters to fit the LM's system. President Nixon recognized this when he flew to Houston the day after Apollo 13 landed to present a special award to the men on the ground.

I am sorry that Lou Boccardi feels that my case against the wire service was "flimsy." I don't, nor do other, more experienced space reporters who covered Apollo 13 and learned of the wire service overwriting from either callbacks from their desks or on their return.

All of which recalls a conversation I had, while preparing the "CJR" article, with an AP reporter who was in Houston. After discussing some of the wire service's problems, this reporter commented that he found people back home were more concerned about the astronauts' safety than we were in Houston. "That was because of your

scare reporting," I replied. That ended the conversation.

I do owe ABC News, Elmer Lower, and Jules Bergman an apology. Though two of the three networks did move slowly, as noted by several TV critics, ABC did move first and quickly, and it is to be commended.

## Enterprise in Illinois

### TO THE REVIEW:

The *Review* is misinformed about the circumstances of Sigma Delta Chi's presentation of its Public Service Award to the Chicago *Daily News* [PASSING COMMENT, Summer]. The award was made because of this newspaper's investigation of the Illinois Supreme Court, its exposé of misconduct on the part of the chief justice and one associate justice, and its role in the ultimate removal of the two from the bench.

The suggestion by the *Review* that the newspaper was "prodded" into action by the Alton *Telegraph* is unworthy of the *Review* and is an unwarranted reflection upon the journalistic purpose and integrity of the *Daily News* and its staff.

We have no quarrel with the Alton *Telegraph*, which did indeed investigate the same original tip that was received by the *Daily News*. (Two other newspapers, including the *New York Times*, also were given the lead, but did not pursue it.) While the *Telegraph's* investigation turned up little new information and apparently failed to detect that some of the tipster's accusations were false, the *Telegraph* did pursue the story with commendable tenacity. Its role—contrary to the statement of the *Review*—was duly noted in the awards entry submitted by the *Daily News* to Sigma Delta Chi.

Your contention that the *Daily News* printed the story only because the *Telegraph* had released its own proposed story to the Associated Press on Wednesday, June 11, is ludicrous.

The *Daily News* had notified its

tipster, Sherman Skolnick, on Tuesday, June 10, that it intended to break the story the following day. This notification was made in accordance with our agreement with Skolnick to permit him to file a "friend of the court" petition simultaneously with our breaking of the story.

At 1 a.m., Wednesday, I received additional information which could greatly strengthen our case against the justices. In order to permit confirmation of that information in the morning, I ordered our story withheld from the first edition, which goes to press at 8:30 a.m. At 9:15 a.m., the information confirmed, I instructed that the story be run under an eight-column headline at the top of page 1. With the receipt by the court clerk of Skolnick's petition, we added certain other now privileged information to our story.

The Alton *Telegraph* printed its story on the same day in its 2 p.m. edition, having delivered an advance copy to the Associated Press, which moved it well after our story was on press. While we had been aware that the *Telegraph* was working on the story, we had no knowledge of its intended publication date and can only presume that this was determined after we had notified Skolnick of ours.

Your commentary states that other papers, once the AP had disseminated the *Telegraph* story, ferreted out important details. We are unaware of any important details in this case which were first "ferreted out" by any newspaper other than the Chicago *Daily News*. But we do appreciate the *Review's* acknowledgement that "the *Daily News* indisputably distinguished itself in the depth and continuity of stories and editorials."

You appear to read something sinister into the fact that we had conducted a prior investigation of one of the two justices a year earlier. As the responsible editor who ordered the first investigation, directed its conduct, and reluctantly concluded that it had failed to produce sufficient evidence to warrant an exposé at that time, I can assure you that I gave the eventual order to print—not reluctantly—but with

the unleashed enthusiasm of one who had been waiting for a year to nail a bad judge with charges I believed would purge him from the court—and did.

ROY M. FISHER  
Editor  
Chicago Daily News

EDITOR'S NOTE: We welcome Mr. Fisher's statement. Statements of others involved do not agree, however.

Joseph Dill, former AP assistant bureau chief in Chicago and now AP Baltimore bureau chief, says, "The story moved on our wire before the Chicago 'Daily News' reached our office, with a story that was . . . less complete than

the one from the 'Telegraph.'"

Sherman Skolnick, Chicago legal researcher who provided material on which both papers based their investigations, reports prodding the "Daily News" to the end with reports of "Telegraph" progress. (He was in the "News" offices the night before the expose broke.) Says Skolnick: "The 'Daily News' only went to press because the Alton 'Telegraph' forced them into it."

When the "News" did run its brief story it omitted, among other points, mention of the central one: the court decision in which the judicial recipient of the bank stock had been involved.

Not the least interesting aspect of the situation, incidentally, is that the new bank's stockholders also were found to include the president of Field Enterprises (publisher of the "Sun-Times" and "Daily News"),

a "Sun-Times" financial writer, a top executive of the "Tribune," its political editor, and one of its Civic Center court reporters.

Because of erroneous information provided by Sigma Delta Chi, we were in error in saying the "Telegraph" received "no mention" in the "Daily News" SDX awards entry. In an exhibit book accompanying its entry the "News" stated: "Skolnick also provided the tip to the Alton 'Telegraph' shortly after he informed the 'Daily News.' The 'Telegraph' did investigate some aspects of the case, and printed its story later on the same day in which the 'Daily News' broke the story."

For our readers' information, the "Daily News'" entire initial story and an equivalent portion of the "Telegraph's" first-day story are reproduced below.

One hundred shares of bank stock given to Illinois Supreme Court Justice Ray I. Klingbiel as a campaign contribution in 1966 ended up two years later with the justice's grandchildren.

The contribution came from Robert Perböhner, then a member of the Illinois Commerce Commission, who told The Daily News that he "gave the stock to the judge because I wanted to do something nice for him."

"In my position one needs to have an 'in' with the court. The judge was completing his

term as chief justice and standing for re-election, so it was a natural thing to do."

Klingbiel acknowledged receiving the shares, explaining that he considered the stock a campaign contribution from Perböhner and Robert Dolph, another ICC member who died last year.

JUSTICE KLINGBIEL was on the ballot for re-election Nov. 8, 1968, but, under the terms of the new judicial article he was running only against his own record. He was unopposed and, therefore, would not be expected to conduct

a campaign in the usual sense of the word.

In fact, Klingbiel did not use the stock for campaign purposes. He held the stock without registering the transfer of ownership for nearly two years, then registered it in the name of his grandchildren.

He explained to The Daily News that he delayed registration for family reasons.

"The stock was for my daughter's children, and I didn't want my son's children to think I was playing favorites with the other side of the family," he said.

Perböhner said the stock was part of the original issue of the Civic Center Bank & Trust Co. He said he bought it for \$2,000 from Theodore Isaacs, an officer of the bank.

KLINGBIEL, in a telephone conversation with The Daily News from Morocco, where he has been vacationing, said:

"I did nothing improper in this matter. I had absolutely no idea where this stock came from, excepting that it was a contribution from Perböhner and Dolph."

—Chicago Daily News, Red Flash edition, June 11, 1969.

By ED POUND and ANDE YAKSTIS  
Telegraph Staff Writers

CHICAGO — Illinois Supreme Court Justice Ray I. Klingbiel in 1967 upheld the dismissal of criminal charges against an officer of the Chicago bank in which the judge had received a gift of stock worth about \$2,000, a Telegraph investigation revealed today.

Klingbiel wrote the opinion for the high court which affirmed a circuit court decision that had quashed conspiracy and collusion charges against Theodore J. Isaacs, former state revenue director and secretary and shareholder in the Civic Center Bank and Trust Co.

Klingbiel received 100 shares of stock from Robert M. Perböhner, a former member of the Illinois Commerce Commission and a longtime friend of Isaacs, a few months before he wrote the opinion. Klingbiel is a Republican.

Shares involved are capital stock of the Civic Center Bank & Trust Co., Chicago.

A Telegraph check of records in the Cook County Recorder of Deeds office revealed the transfer of stock from Perböhner to Klingbiel.

The records also showed that Perböhner received the 100 shares from Isaacs. The stock in Isaacs' name was transferred to Perböhner on Oct. 11, 1966 — only a month after Isaacs' criminal case went before the Supreme Court.

Although the stock was originally listed in his name, Isaacs claims that the shares actually belonged to the bank and were not his personal stock.

The Citizens Committee to Clean Up the Courts today asked the state high court for an investigation into the decision which upheld the lower court's ruling in Isaacs' criminal case.

Sherman H. Skolnick, chairman of the watchdog organization, asked in a motion mailed to the court "for an investigation of the decision in this (Isaacs) case, and that . . . the records of this court be purged on the decision in this case."

Justice Klingbiel, of Moline, and Perböhner told conflicting stories about how the justice received the stock, which is valued at about \$2,000.

Reached in Spain, where he is vacationing, Klingbiel told a Telegraph reporter he received the stock, "as a campaign contribution" for his 1966 re-election bid.

Klingbiel added there was nothing "improper" in the transfer of stock to him.

Klingbiel said the contribution was made by Perböhner and the late Robert E. Dolph, who at that time were both members of the Illinois Commerce Commission.

The justice told the Telegraph that in 1968, two years after he received the stock contribution, he gave the shares to two of his grandchildren. The stock presently is registered in the grandchildren's names, but Justice Klingbiel conceded that he personally owned the stocks until they were transferred to his grandchildren on Sept. 5, 1968.

"I was running for re-election in 1966 and he (Perböhner) told me that he and Bob Dolph wanted me to have the stocks as a campaign contribution," Klingbiel explained. "I got the stock sometime in the fall of 1966 and I held it because I couldn't

make up my mind who to give it to."

"I thought I could sell it," Klingbiel said that.

"In blank," to do what? Klingbiel flatly denied that.

With Civic Center. He said in connection with Klingbiel said he handled

numerical system which Perböhner told a

He was contacted in a surgery.

Perböhner repeated from him at about par

time — after a reporter received the stock as a

"If he says I gave it to Perböhner said he

shares, "I paid the bank Isaacs because I wanted

said.

Isaacs, who was an Kerner, said that when

personally had to sign the neighborhood of \$200,

so that Civic Center could be opened.

He said he was the

—Alton Telegraph, June 11, 1969.

## Footnote on the Guild

### TO THE REVIEW:

I write with reference to Curtis MacDougall's review of my book, *A Union of Individuals* [Summer]. As a longtime admirer of Professor MacDougall—selections from his history of Henry Wallace's 1948 Presidential bid have been for some time required reading for my students—I find it difficult to take issue with his critique. Moreover, he was quite generous in his praise. Yet, I feel a rejoinder is necessary to his judgment that the book "is just one chapter and one footnote too short."

The reference to the footnote concerns my not citing an article by Willard Bleyer in a 1934 issue of *Quill* blasting the publishers for the low editorial salary scales in the industry's proposed NRA newspaper code. I did not make use of this article simply because I preferred to use primary sources (i.e., the code's salary provisions; the contemporary ANG and government analyses of these provisions; the testimony at the various hearings held by the NRA in 1933, 1934, and 1935; and the like). The whole question of the code's salary provisions is related in detail in Chapters Three, Four, and Six, and it is made clear throughout that the industry's intransigence concerning wages (as well as other working conditions) played a major part in the transformation of the Guild into a union.

Whatever Bleyer's attitude toward the publishers may have been in 1934, he never recanted his 1919 position in favor of a professional association. As one of the great teachers of journalism he rightly was outraged at the pay his students would receive when they entered the profession, but he did not support unionization. The American Newspaper Guild as it necessarily began to change when the direction of a labor organization in 1934 received no encouragement from him to develop in that direction, Professor MacDougall's inferences notwithstanding.

As for the "omitted chapter," it was my intention to detail and ana-

lyze (as I point out on page 2) how a group of editorial employees imbued with the "usual middle-class aspirations" had by 1936 become a "militant trade union." As the Introduction makes clear, I was concerned with the *process* of forming a white-collar labor organization. In any event, between 1933 and 1936 the emphasis *was* almost entirely on bringing the Guild into the house of labor. This emphasis is attested to by guild publications, by the ANG's correspondence files, and by the recollections of the more than fifty guildsmen active on both the national and local scene whom I interviewed. The question of industrial unionism did arise but never as a serious issue; those guildsmen who initially favored industrial unionism knew that first the ANG had to be transformed into a union.

DANIEL J. LEAB  
Associate Dean for  
Academic Affairs  
Columbia College  
New York City

## Myths and Violence

### TO THE REVIEW:

Terry Ann Knopf's article "Media Myths on Violence" [Spring] contains some glaring inaccuracies concerning the Cornell student union takeover of April, 1969. I covered it, starting with the crucial judiciary board meeting two days before the actual takeover.

I agree with the author that the now-famous picture of the armed blacks emerging from the student union may have given many people the erroneous impression that the building was seized at gunpoint. Nevertheless, the fact that they thought it necessary to arm themselves at any time is without a doubt the crux of the story.

Approximately one hour after the crucial judiciary meeting ended a burning cross was discovered and extinguished by an Ithaca police detective. To say that that event was "largely ignored" reveals a lamentable narrowness of reading

habits. It was well reported in *Life*, the *New York Times*, and AP stories, to name a few. In fact, John Kifner of the *Times* was one of the first reporters on the takeover story because he was dispatched to Ithaca right after the cross incident.

The alleged "radio reports" that carloads of armed whites were moving toward the campus never existed. It is true that friends of the black students on campus had relayed such *rumors* to them, but there was never any truth to them; I am happy to say that local radio stations had the news judgment not to broadcast such inflammatory stories without checking their accuracy.

In stating that the guns were not loaded, the author fell for the transparent fiction given out by the Cornell administration. Although Cornell Vice President for Public Affairs Steven Muller positively stated that the guns were not loaded, a large group of reporters, including me, saw that the guns were indeed loaded as Muller signed an agreement with the black students.

RICHARD M. WARSHAUER  
Senior Editor  
Cornell Daily Sun

## PR Prizes

### TO THE REVIEW:

I believe David Zinman's article, "Should Newsmen Accept PR Prizes?" [Spring], to be a constructive contribution that could prompt editors, publishers, contest promoters, contest winners, and journalism schools to appraise an area that deserves attention. He asks of the contest promoters: "Who would probe their motives and operations?" Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of journalism students and their professors are available for the task. They have the time and the resources to analyze the content of winning entries in all manner of contests for newsmen.

DAVID L. BEAL  
Vestal, N.Y.

## REPORT ON REPORTS

Summaries and reviews  
of current literature in journalism

"The Evening Star: The Good Grey Lady is No. 2, and Not Really Trying Harder," by Joseph C. Goulden, the *Washingtonian*, January, 1970; "Covering the Capitol," by Stanford Sesser, *Wall Street Journal*, August 18, 1970.

Free-lance reporter Goulden, discussing why the *Star* in the last decade lost its dominant position in Washington, D. C., to the *Post*, maintains that the *Star* bogged down "in tradition and family during the very period it faced its most strenuous competitive situation." Sesser, analyzing present editorial operations of the *Post*, describes it as "the very best paper in the nation in its editorials and investigative reporting, and, overall, second only to the *New York Times*."

"On covering the revolution," by Neal B. Rosenau, *Chicago Journalism Review*, September, 1970.

A former reporter now teaching history at Roosevelt University, examining media coverage of three 1970 rallies by the Black Panthers and by peace groups, concludes that the "monumental anomalies in the coverage of political rallies hardly seem to be accidental" or due to ignorance.

"Obstacles to Reform: Nobody Covers the House," by Michael Green, *Washington Monthly*, June, 1970.

Congressional correspondent Green, presenting a forceful case that the House of Representatives is poorly covered, argues that if the public is to be made aware of the need for Congressional reform "it is high time that we started writing about the House as it is."

"Separating Fact/Emotion — by Edict or By Example," by Derick Daniels, *Bulletin of the American Society of Newspaper Editors*, February, 1970.

The executive editor of the *Detroit Free Press*, warning against "stomping our foot at a whole new generation of newspapermen," presents a case for "activist editing" encompassing interpretation that provides, "beyond the facts, an understanding of the context in which those facts operate."

"You are the More Cupcakeable for Being a *Cosmopolitan Girl*," by William F. Buckley, Jr., *National Review*, September 22, 1970.

A pithy, ascerbic commentary on *Cosmopolitan* and its editor, Helen Gurley Brown.

"Through the Pulp Darkly: A Foray into Fanland," by Aljean Harmetz, *Show*, September 3, 1970.

An interesting tour of the world of the fan magazines by a "fanzine" writer who argues that they "are not more guilty [of irresponsibility and voyeurism] by intent than other magazines."

"Black Radio: On a High Wire with No Net," *Broadcasting*, August 31, 1970.

An informative "special report" on black radio's problems, with supplemental profiles of various Negro-oriented stations.

"Why Newspapers Are Making Money Again," *Business Week*, August 29, 1970.

Essentially an overview of operations of Knight Newspapers, Inc., this report, with its emphasis on changes outside the editorial offices, highlights why "the elder Knight and the rest of his management team have nothing but optimism for the prospects of their company and industry."

"How Radio One Got That Way," by Frank Judge, *Detroit News' Sunday Magazine*, August 16, 1970.

The *News'* TV-radio critic entertainingly recounts the history of Detroit's WWJ, the first commercial station to begin regular broadcasting (August 20, 1920).

"The Tough, Talented and Sometimes Tarnished Automotive Press Corps," by James C. Jones, *Ward's Auto World*, June-July, 1970.

*Newsweek's* Detroit bureau chief, reporting on the newsmen who cover the automobile industry, concludes merely that they are "fair reflections of any specialized segment of the national press. . . ."

"With the National Geographic on its Endless, Cloudless Voyage," by Tom Buckley, *New York Times Magazine*, September 6, 1970.

In a sophisticated account of the magazine and the family that controls it, *Times* staff writer Buckley equates the *Geographic* with *TV Guide*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Playboy* in being able to "appeal to Middle America and its illusions."

DANIEL J. LEAB



the lower case

Paratroopers look for Droppings in N.W.T.

—Yellowknife, N.W.T., Canada, *News of the North*, March 26.

**Newsmen Threaten Exposure**

—*Guild Reporter*, July 24.

***Why crime should be legalized***

—*Chicago Sun-Times*, Sept. 20.

Cook new planning chief

—*Cape Cod Standard-Times*, July 17.

**HUSSEIN IS RULING  
BY MARTIAL LAW;  
FEDAYEEN ANGRY**

—*New York Times*, Sept. 17.

**Truck Hits  
Bicyclist;  
Toll Is 449**

—*Denver Post*, Sept. 3.

**Teacher Wants  
To Be Unveiled;  
Meeting Tonight**

—*Springfield, Mass., Daily News*, Aug. 17.

**People In The News...**



**Cruises For Servicemen**

Julia and David Eisenhower inaugurated a series of Thursday cruises for servicemen from the Washington area hospitals when the USS Sequoia breezed down the Potomac River. The young couple is shown greeting Mike Lindhurst, a 19-year-old patient at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C.

**Cruise to remember**

—*New Haven Register*, May 22.

properties.

Mrs. Glenn M. Tooke Jr. of Austin is guest curator for the representative collection of different types of quilts, all made in Texas. This is the first Winedale display to be held in the state.

**Quilt complex**

—Austin, Tex., *American Statesman*, Sept. 13.

...the people ... put  
all the dough for us."

So win or lose come Sunday evening, Orville still has to be a winner. He'll have a milestone off his neck.

Unless, of course, he beats ... saying Jack Nicklaus,

**Milestone to remember**

—*New York Post*, June 18.

...Aviation  
Space Writers Association.

He said that China reported the weight of its satellite, launched on April 24, as 381 pounds. The second object, previously undisclosed, is believed to be part of the "final stages" of the missile which orbited the satellite," Mr. Henkin said. Military sources here said it ...

**Misguided missile**

—*New York Times*, May 20.

...TROIE (Continued from page 208)

herent in this study. These problems, together with the potential importance of the findings, underline the importance of similar but expanded studies to insure the generalizability of the findings and more closely controlled experimental studies to isolate more definitively the important elements.

**Professional gobbledegook**

—*Journalism Quarterly* (page 233), Summer, 1970.

## Second reading

# **"Where so much is new, what is news?"**

■ Today's network of news may serve the times less effectively than did the fifteenth century's. Then, 99 per cent of knowledge was far from new. Basic information, basic economic and social skills, basic beliefs and values descended from parent to child. Against this static and familiar background news could be readily isolated; prodigies of nature, interventions by supernatural or political powers, the novel speculations of savants—these exceptions to the normal course were news. But now this kind of news has been outstripped by reality. The pace, breadth, and depth of twentieth-century change have dissolved the static background. . . . Where so much is new, what is news?

Journalism has not fully adjusted itself to the transformed situation. Conditioned by its own past, journalism often acts as if its main task were still to report the exceptional and dramatically different against a background of what everybody knows. News today can concentrate with tremendous impact on a few great stories: a moon landing, a war, a series of civil disorders. But meanwhile, outside the spotlight, other great advances in science and technology, other international tensions, other causes of social unrest are in motion. Yet today's inadequately reported trends will shape tomorrow's reality. . . .

Why does so much of journalism remain trapped in "the story," the dramatic, disruptive, exceptional event that properly formed the corpus of news in the generations when the broad background of society was shifting very slowly? Why is journalism still so wrapped up in the deadline, the scoop, the gee-whiz—and so seemingly unable to notice that most of what is new will not fit into a narrative pattern of what happened in the last twenty-four hours? . . . The editorial reason for it has diminished to the vanishing point. Yet much of journalism still operates as if its circulation and its usefulness depended on the second hand of the clock rather than the depth of perception, the accuracy of its report, the relevance of its coverage, and the balance of its judgment.

—Max Ways,  
"What's Wrong with News? It Isn't New Enough,"  
"Fortune," October, 1969.

2